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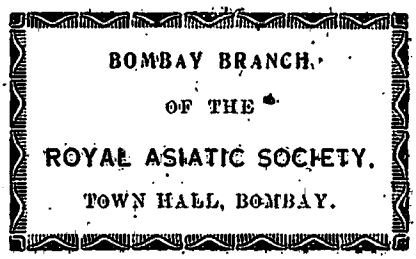

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THE LIFE

OF

MARIE DE MEDICIS,

QUEEN OF FRANCE,

CONSORT OF HENRY IV., AND REGENT OF THE KINGDOM UNDER LOUIS XIII.

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BY MISS PARDOE,

AUTHOR OF

"LOUIS XIV. AND THE COURT OF FRANCE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY,"
"THE CITY OF THE SULTAN," &c.

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BOOK I.

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CHAPTER VIII.

[1609.]

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PHILIP OF SPAIN PROMISES HIS PROTECTION TO THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ —HE IS INVITED TO RETURN TO BRUSSELS—THE MARQUIS DE CŒUVRES ENDEAVOURS TO EFFECT THE RETURN OF THE PRINCE TO FRANCE— HIS NEGOCIATION FAILS — MADAME DE CONDÉ IS PLACED UNDER SURVEILLANCE—HER WEARINESS OF THE COURT OF BRUSSELS—THE DUKE DE MONTMORENCY DESIRES HER RETURN TO PARIS—M. DE CŒUVRES IS AUTHORISED TO EFFECT HER ESCAPE FROM BRUSSELS— THE PLOT PROSPERS — INDISCRETION OF THE KING — THE QUEEN INFORMS THE SPANISH MINISTER OF THE CONSPIRACY—MADAME DE CONDÉ IS REMOVED TO THE ARCHDUCAL PALACE—MORTIFICATION OF THE KING—THE FRENCH ENVOYS EXPOSTULATE WITH THE ARCHDUKE, WHO REMAINS FIRM—HENRY RESOLVES TO DECLARE WAR AGAINST SPAIN AND FLANDERS—FRESH NEGOCIATIONS—THE KING DETERMINES TO HEAD THE ARMY IN PERSON—MARIE DE MEDICIS BECOMES REGENT OF FRANCE—SHE IS COUNSELLED BY CONCINI TO URGE HER CORONATION—RELUCTANCE OF THE KING TO ACCEDE TO HER REQUEST—HE FINALLY CONSENTS — "THE BEST HUSBAND IN THE WORLD" — FATAL PROGNOSTICS—SIGNS IN THE HEAVENS—THE CURÉ OF MONTARGIS— THE PAPAL WARNING — THE CARDINAL BARBERINO — THE SULTAN'S MESSAGE—SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES—SUPINENESS OF THE AUSTRIAN CABINET—PROPHECY OF ANNE DE COMANS—HER MISERABLE FATE—THE ASTROLOGER THOMASSIN — THE BERNESE NOBLE—THE QUEEN'S DREAM —ROYAL PRESENTIMENTS—THE HAWTHORN OF THE LOUVRE—DISTRESS OF BASSOMPIERRE—EXPOSTULATION OF THE KING—MELANCHOLY FOREBODINGS.

THE LIFE

OF

MARIE DE MEDICIS.

CHAPTER VIII.

[1609.]

In the year upon which we are now about to enter, the subject of our biography occupies, unfortunately, but a small space, destined as it was to give birth to the most violent and the most dangerous passion of the whole life of Henry IV., and that which left the most indelible stain upon his memory, both as a man and as a monarch.

On the 7th of February the court went into mourning for the Grand-Duke of Tuscany, the uncle of the Queen, to whom she was ardently attached, and all the carnival amusements were consequently suspended; but not before the Queen had resolved upon the performance of the ballet which she had previously refused to sanction, when her royal consort had proposed as one of its performers the Countess de Moret, his late favourite.

The rehearsal of this entertainment took place on the 16th of January; and the nymphs of Diana were represented by the twelve reigning beauties of the court, among whom the most lovely was Charlotte Marguerite de Montmorency.* So extraordinary, indeed, were her personal attractions, combined with a modesty of demeanour more than unusual at the court in that age, that even the most experienced of the great nobles were compelled to confess that they had never heretofore seen any person who could compete with her. "The purity of her complexion," says Dreux du Radier, quoting from one of the old chroniclers, "was admirable; her eyes lively, and full of tenderness, inspired passion in the most careless hearts; she had not a feature in her face which was not gracefully moulded. The tones of her voice, her bearing, her slightest movements, had a charm which compelled admiration; and it was yielded the more willingly that it was elicited by no artifice on her part, but was a tribute to her natural merits. Nature had, indeed, done everything for her;

* Mademoiselle de Montmorency was the daughter of Henry, first of the name, Duke de Montmorency, marshal and constable of France, celebrated in the history of the civil wars under the name of Damville, who died on the 2nd of April, 1614, and of Louise de Budos, his second wife, who had, on her appearance at court, attracted the attention of the King. This lady, who became the wife of the maréchal, in 1593, died in 1598. Charlotte Marguerite was born in 1594, and was consequently but fifteen years of age when she entered the household of the Queen.

and she had no occasion to resort to any adventitious aid however innocent.*

This lady, thus richly gifted with youth, beauty, and high birth, had been, even before her appearance at court, promised in marriage by her father to the Maréchal de Bassompierre, to whom indeed he had himself offered her hand;† but she was no sooner seen by Henry in the circle of the Queen, than he became violently enamoured of her person, and resolved to prevent the alliance; a determination in which he found himself strengthened by the remonstrances of the Duke de Bouillon, the nephew of the connétable, and consequently the cousin of the young beauty, whose favour Bassompierre had, in the excess of his happiness, neglected to conciliate; and who represented to the King that he could not conceal his astonishment on ascertaining that his Majesty was about to permit the union of Mademoiselle de Montmorency with a mere noble, however deserving of such distinction, when the Prince de Condé had attained to a marriageable age, and that it would be imprudent to countenance his alliance with a foreign princess; while as regarded himself, he could not discover another eligible match save his cousin or Mademoiselle du Maine; and he was inclined to believe that none of the advisers of his Majesty would counsel him to authorise his own marriage with the latter, while the remnant of the League continued so formidable as to threaten

* Bentivoglio, Della Fuga del Principe dé Condé.

† Bassompierre, Mém., p. 53.

a still more forcible and dangerous demonstration should they once find themselves under a leader with the power which he possessed to further their cause. He then represented that his alliance with Mademoiselle de Montmorency would involve no such results, as the allies and interests of the constable were his own; and concluded by entreating that his Majesty, before he sanctioned the marriage of Bassompierre with his cousin, would give the matter ample reflection.*

This contention, there can be no doubt, piqued the curiosity of the King, who in the course of the day mentioned the circumstance to the Duke de Bellegarde. The chance of the rivals in the favour of the lady herself could scarcely be doubtful, as the Duke de Bouillon, prince of the blood though he was, possessed few personal attractions, while the gay, the gallant, the magnificent Bassompierre was the cynosure of all eyes; superb in person, he was moreover of high birth, great wealth (although his profusion occasionally fettered his means), in high favour with the monarch, and celebrated alike for his wit and his attainments. Unfortunately, however, for his interests, M. le Grand had already seen Mademoiselle de Montmorency, and the animated description which he volunteered to the King of the coveted beauty was far from proving favourable to the views of Bassompierre, as Henry, before he came to any decision upon so important a question, resolved to decide for himself the value of the prize which he was

* Bassompierre, Mém., p. 55.

about to adjudge to one or other of the contending parties. For this purpose he therefore joined the evening circle of the Queen, where he first saw the daughter of the connétable, but apparently without the effect which had been anticipated by the Duke de Bellegarde.

On the morrow, however, he proved less insensible to the surpassing loveliness of the young lady of honour; her modest dignity in a private saloon offering, in all probability, little attraction to the licentious monarch who was accustomed to see every eye turned towards himself, and every art exerted to fascinate his notice; but on the day of the rehearsal, when the graceful and blushing nymph of Diana was presented to him in her classic garb, her quiver at her back, and her spear in her hand, he at once acknowledged the potency of the spell by which others had been previously subjugated. The rehearsal took place in the great hall of the Louvre, where Henry was attended only by the Duke de Bellegarde, and Montespan,* the captain of his body-guard.

The extraordinary loveliness of the young Princess, combined with her exquisite grace and dignified bear-

* Hector de Pardaillan, Seigneur de Montespan, who died in 1611, at the advanced age of eighty years. He was the father of Antoine-Arnauld de Pardaillan, first Marquis d'Antin, grandfather of Roger-Hector, Marquis d'Antin, great-grandfather of Louis-Henri, Marquis de Montespan, the husband of Françoise Athenaïs de Rochechouard Mortemart, the celebrated favourite of Louis XIV.

ing, at once fascinated the King, who declared to the Duke de Bellegarde that he had never before beheld so faultless a face and form; to which assurance M. le Grand replied, says Bassompierre, "according to his usual manner of extolling everything that was novel, and particularly Mademoiselle de Montmorency, who was indeed worthy of all admiration; and thus infused into the mind of the King, always ready to yield to a new fancy, the passion which subsequently caused him to commit so many extravagances."*

For the moment, however, Henry was unable to pursue his unworthy purpose, being attacked the same evening by a violent fit of gout, to which he had been occasionally subject for the last four years, and which declared itself on this occasion with so much violence that during fifteen days he was compelled to keep his bed. Meanwhile, the Duke de Bouillon was not idle. Considering himself aggrieved by the connétable in not having been selected as the husband of his daughter, he complained loudly and bitterly of the slight; and even induced the Duke de Roquelaure to exert his influence with M. de Montmorency to withdraw his promise from Bassompierre, and to bestow the hand of the Princess upon himself. The connétable, however, remained firm, declaring that he had already the honour to be the great-uncle of M. de Bouillon, a degree of kindred which quite satisfied his ambition; and that his daughter, being pledged to

* Mémoires, p. 55.

Bassompierre, could no longer be an object of pursuit with any prospect of success to any other noble, however great might be his rank; while, in pursuance of this resolution, the duke caused preparations to be made for the celebration of the marriage in the chapel of his palace at Chantilly. Bassompierre was consequently at the summit of happiness; his ambition and his heart were alike satisfied; and he received the congratulations of those around him with an undisguised delight, which, in so proverbially gay and gallant a cavalier, could not fail to prove highly flattering to the object of his attachment.

Unfortunately, before the ceremony could be performed, M. de Montmorency was in his turn attacked by gout; and, greatly to the mortification of the expectant bridegroom, the marriage was necessarily deferred. Still, relying on the assurance of the connétable that nothing should induce him to rescind his resolution, Bassompierre endeavoured to await with what patience he might, the termination of the inopportune illness of the generous Prince; and in the interim he shared with M. le Grand, and the Duke de Grammont, the honour of passing the night in the royal chamber, where the three nobles alternately read or conversed with the King during his sleepless hours. Throughout the day the monarch received the visits of the Queen and the princesses of the blood, among whom the most welcome was the Duchess d'Angoulême; who was, on every

occasion accompanied by her niece Mademoiselle de Montmorency, whom Henry did not fail to engross whenever the duchess was engaged in conversation with the members of the court circle. Still, however, the King was careful not to betray to the young lady herself the peculiar feeling with which she had inspired him, but treated her with a kindness which was almost paternal; alluding without any apparent reluctance to her betrothment to Bassompierre, and assuring her that she should be as dear to him as a daughter; and that during the tour of duty of her husband, as first lord of the bedchamber, she should have a suite of apartments appropriated to her use in the Louvre; but in a few days, when he had accustomed her to converse freely with him upon the subject, Henry put a leading question which must, after all these gracious promises, have tended to startle Mademoiselle de Montmorency, by demanding to know if she personally desired the marriage; as, should it be otherwise, she need only confess the truth with frankness, when he would set it aside, and procure for her an alliance more to her taste; adding that he was even willing to bestow her hand upon his own nephew the Prince de Condé. In reply the Princess modestly but firmly assured his Majesty that as her union with M. de Bassompierre was the wish of her father, she felt convinced that her destiny would be a happy one; and there can be no doubt that she said this more emphatically than she had intended; as, from

that moment, Henry became convinced that she really loved her intended husband, and he resolved in consequence to prevent the marriage.

Unhappily for all parties the monarch appeared to have forgotten that he had reached his fifty-sixth year, that he was rapidly becoming a martyr to the gout, and that he was no longer calculated to enter into a successful rivalry with his younger and more attractive nobility; a delusion which was unfortunately encouraged, according to Mezeray, by his confidential friends, the relatives of the lady, and even the members of the Queen's household; who, in the hope of at length triumphing over his former favourites, exerted themselves to increase his passion for the daughter of the connétable;* a passion which they moreover doubtlessly imagined could not, from the high rank and peculiar position of Mademoiselle de Montmorency, exceed the limits of propriety. The intentions of Henry himself were, however, as was subsequently proved, of a far less innoxious tendency than those for which others so erroneously gave him credit. At eight o'clock on the following morning he sent for Bassompierre; and having caused the attendants to leave the room, he motioned him to kneel down upon the cushion beside his bed, when he assured him that he had been thinking seriously of the propriety of his taking a wife.

"Ah! Sire;" said the delighted courtier, perfectly

* Mezeray, vol. x, p. 369.

unsuspicious of the real meaning of the monarch; "had not the same unlucky disease under which your Majesty is also suffering attacked the connétable, I should ere this have been a husband."

"No;" was the hurried reply, as the King looked steadfastly at his intended victim; "such is not my meaning. What I desire is, to bestow upon you the hand of Mademoiselle d'Aumale, and by this means to revive the duchy d'Aumale in your favour."

"But I am betrothed, Sire, and cannot take a second wife!"

"Bassompierre;" said Henry with an emotion which he was unable to conceal; "I have become passionately attached to Mademoiselle de Montmorency. If you marry her and she loves you, you will be the object of my hatred; while should I, under such circumstances, induce her to love me, you would hate me in your turn. You are aware of my attachment towards yourself, and it will be far better to avoid this risk by not placing either party in so trying a position. As regards the lady, I have resolved upon uniting her to my nephew the Prince de Condé, and of keeping her at court. Her presence and intercourse will be the charm and amusement of the old age which is fast creeping upon me. I shall give to my nephew, who is young, and who prefers a thousand times a hunt to a lady's love, a hundred thousand annual francs with which to amuse himself, and all that I shall ask of his wife in return will be the affection of a child."

The habits and manners of the court at that age admitted but of one reply to this cold and selfish declaration. Bassompierre pressed his lips upon the hand which lay upon the velvet coverlet, and assured the King that it had ever been the desire of his life to find an opportunity of sacrificing his own happiness to that of his Majesty; that he did not seek to deny the extent of his disappointment; but that he nevertheless voluntarily pledged himself never again to renew a suit which counteracted the views and wishes of his sovereign; and trusted that this new passion might be productive of as much delight to his Majesty as the loss of such a bride must have grieved himself, had he not been amply consoled by the consciousness of having merited the confidence of his King.

"Then," he says, with a *naïveté* at which it is impossible to suppress a smile; "the King embraced me, and wept; assuring me that he would further my fortunes as though I were one of his natural children, that he loved me dearly, as I must be well assured, and that he would reward my frankness and friendship."*

On quitting the royal presence, the discomfited courtier hastened to confide his sorrows to M. d'Epernon, who endeavoured to console him with the assurance that the King's passion for Mademoiselle de Montmorency was a mere passing caprice, as well as his declared intention of marrying her to the Prince de Condé;

* Mémoires, p. 56.

reminding him, moreover, that as the admiration of the monarch for the young lady had already become matter of notoriety, it was highly improbable that M. de Condé would, under the circumstances, accept her as a wife. The worthy minister had, however, forgotten that the Prince was entirely dependent upon his royal relative; that he had not yet been invested with any government or official post; and that he was young, ambitious, and high-spirited. Bassompierre bears testimony to his possession of the latter quality by his assurance that, important as the favour of the monarch could not fail to be in his peculiar position to the young Prince, he did not finally give his personal consent to the alliance until he had obtained a solemn declaration from Henry of the perfect purity of his proffered bride.

It is very singular that throughout all the details given of this affair by contemporary writers, no mention is made of the measures adopted by the King to induce or to enforce, the violation of the plighted word of the connétable to Bassompierre. Even he himself is totally silent upon the subject; whence we are compelled to infer that the will of the sovereign was considered to be beyond appeal, and that his sole pleasure exonerated the Duke de Montmorency from his voluntary engagement. The whole transaction, indeed, is so entangled and incomprehensible, particularly when the high rank of all the persons concerned in it is considered, that it betrays an amount of recklessness and tyranny on

the part of the King which it is difficult to realise in our own times.

Mezeray asserts that it was in order to compel the affections of Mademoiselle de Montmorency through her gratitude, that Henry resolved to unite her to the first prince of the blood, and thus elevate her to the highest rank at court save that of the Queen.* Be this as it may, it is certain that he prevailed over the reluctance of both parties, and that a week subsequently to the interview described, the Prince de Condé declared his willingness to accept the bride proposed to him by the sovereign; while having a short time afterwards encountered a number of the great nobles at the levée of the King, he personally invited them to assist at his betrothal that same evening. Among others, he thus addressed Bassompierre, who replied only by a low and ceremonious salutation. Henry had, however, remarked the circumstance, and beckoning the marquis to his side, he inquired what had passed between them.

"Monseigneur suggested, Sire, a step which I am not inclined to take."

"And what was that?" demanded the King.

"That I should accompany him to witness his betrothal. Is he not old enough to go alone? and can he not be affianced without my presence? For thus much I can answer, that if he have no other

* Mezeray, vol. x, p. 365.

companion than myself, his suite will be a small one."

"Nevertheless, Bassompierre, you must be there," said Henry imperiously.

"I cannot, Sire;" expostulated his companion; "I entreat of you not to insist on my compliance, as I shall be driven to disobey you. Let it suffice that I have sacrificed a passion which had become the very principle of my existence in order to secure your peace and happiness, and do not ask me to become the witness of my own bitter disappointment."

"The King 'who was the best of men,'" pursues the chronicler; "simply replied: 'I plainly see, Bassompierre, that you are angry, but I feel sure that you will not fail when you remember that it was my nephew, the first prince of the blood, by whom you were invited.'"

Further expostulation was impossible; and Bassompierre saw himself compelled to drain even to the very dregs his cup of mortification. The ceremony took place in the gallery of the Louvre with almost fabulous pomp. Mademoiselle de Montmorency was attended by all the princesses of the blood, and took her place immediately beside the Queen; while the Prince stood upon the right hand of the King, who being still feeble, with a refinement of cruelty which it is equally difficult to explain and to justify, selected Bassompierre upon whom to lean; and thus kept him throughout the whole of the ceremonial in the immediate vicinity of the affianced pair.

A few days after this ceremony a ballet was danced

at the Arsenal in honour of the event, at which their Majesties and all the court were present; and on Shrove Tuesday a tilting at the ring took place, where Mademoiselle de Montmorency delivered the prize to the victor. The Queen, who had remarked with apprehension the growing passion of her royal consort for the young Princess, was overjoyed at the contemplated marriage; believing as she did that she must have been self-deluded, as it was beyond credibility that, had she been correct in her surmises, Henry would have sought to unite the object of his preference to his own nephew. Thus, therefore, she overwhelmed the bride-elect with the most condescending kindness, and even arranged a ballet in her honour in which she herself appeared. "It was," says Bassompierre, "at once the most beautiful and the last in which she ever danced."*

On Tuesday, the 10th of March, the marriage took place at Chantilly in the presence of their Majesties and the whole court; and if the cheek of the bride were pale, and the lip of the gallant Bassompierre trembled, during the ceremony which made Charlotte de Montmorency the wife of another, all the other actors in the brilliant drama were too fully occupied with their respective parts to heed the silent emotion of the sufferers. The King presented as his offering to the lady two thousand crowns for the purchase of her *trousseau*, and jewels of the value of eighteen thousand livres; while he gave to

* Mémoires, p. 58.

the Prince a large amount both in plate and money;* the Queen was also profuse in her generosity, and several days were spent in the most splendid festivities, after which the royal party returned to Paris, whither they were shortly followed by the Prince and Princess de Condé; on whose arrival a grand ball was given by the ex-Queen Marguerite, where Henry was once more enthralled by the exquisite dancing of the graceful bride, and so unequivocally betrayed his admiration as to renew all the slumbering apprehensions of the unfortunate Queen.

It was soon evident, however, that M. de Condé was by no means prepared to lend himself to the licentious views of the King, and he maintained so strict a guard over his beautiful young wife that neither sarcasm nor reproach could induce him to relax his vigilance. This opposition only served to aggravate the unhappy passion of the monarch; while the indignation of the Prince, and the anger of the Queen were, although from a different motive, similarly excited; and in the month of July, during the festivities which took place on the marriage of the Duke de Vendôme with Mademoiselle de Mercœur, the advances of the monarch to the wife of his nephew became so undisguised that the latter openly resented so great an insult to his honour; a crime for which he was immediately punished by the revocation of all the grants made to him on the occasion of his marriage, and reduced

* Sully, Mém., vol. vii, p. 189.

to comparative poverty.* This extreme and wanton severity produced a diametrically opposite effect to that which had been anticipated by the King, the Prince instantly feeling that he had been wronged as well as insulted; while the Queen, alarmed by the evident progress of this new and fatal passion, which must, should it ultimately prove successful, overwhelm the monarch with disgrace and remorse from the near consanguinity of the parties, did not fail to urge upon M. de Condé in the most energetic manner the necessity of preserving alike his own honour and that of the King, by removing his wife from the court. This advice found support on all sides; as those who made it a matter of conscience, trembled at the idea of the scandal which must ensue; while others, who merely sought to annoy the sovereign without any regard for his reputation, still saw their purpose answered by the proposed departure of the Princess.

Difficult as it was for the Prince to consent to a separation from his beautiful young bride, the perseverance of Henry soon convinced him that he had no other alternative, and he accordingly caused her to quit the capital, and to take up her temporary abode at Saint-Valery; but the remonstrances of the monarch were so earnest, and he succeeded so thoroughly in concealing his indignation against M. de Condé personally, that for a time he flattered himself that he should be enabled to effect her recal. Upon this point, however, the Prince

* Sully, Mém., vol. vii, pp. 191, 192.

was firm; and as day after day went by without eliciting the obedience which he had anticipated, the entreaties of the King were exchanged for threats. Nor did Henry rest satisfied even with this display of displeasure towards his young kinsman; for, resolved to ascertain if he should not be more favourably received by the Princess herself, he assumed a disguise, and proceeded with a few attendants to the place of her retreat in order to obtain an interview. On ascertaining this fact M. de Condé removed her to Muret; but the pursuit of the King was so resolute that the harassed bride-groom ultimately found himself compelled to choose between his ruin or his dishonour.*

His first measure was to change the residence of the Princess from Saint-Valery to his château at Breteuil, and to expostulate with her upon the encouragement which she gave by her levity to the advances of the monarch; but as some time passed without any further cause for alarm, the Prince at length began to feel greater confidence; and in the month of November joined a hunting expedition which compelled him to absent himself from his wife, a circumstance that was forthwith communicated to Henry, who immediately assumed a second disguise, and proceeded to Breteuil. M. de Condé had, however, been careful to establish a strict watch over his household; and being apprised in his turn of the royal visit, he suddenly returned, and the disappointed monarch was compelled to leave the château.

* Mezeray, vol. x, pp. 370, 371.

Madame de Verneuil, to whom the adventure was soon made known, and who, despite the extreme precariousness of her position, never failed to revenge herself upon the King whenever an opportunity presented itself, related the whole story in his presence during a court reception, only suppressing the name of the adventurous lover; an indiscretion which so offended and alarmed the Prince that he determined to emancipate himself from the threatened disgrace.*

He felt that he had but one alternative, for he was too high-spirited to condescend to disgrace, whatever might be the penalty of his resistance; and driven at length to an expedient which wounded his pride, but which he found it impossible to reject, he affected to be determined by the anger of the monarch, and requested permission to go in person to conduct the Princess back to court. This was instantly and joyfully conceded; and M. de Condé no sooner found himself free to act, than he set forth; but, instead of returning to Paris as Henry had anxiously anticipated, he took the precaution to have relays of post-horses secretly secured throughout the road to the Low Countries.†

On his arrival at Muret the Prince lost not a moment in causing the Princess to enter a carriage drawn by eight horses which he had provided for the purpose, and at once proceeded to Flanders by way of Artois. The dread of dishonour, coupled with the fear of arrest upon the road, lent wings to his speed;

* Montfaucon, vol. v, p. 425.

† Daniel, vol. vii, p. 498.

and without once alighting the Prince and his fair companion reached Landrecies;* the entire suite of the first prince and princess of the blood comprising on this occasion only Messieurs de Rochefort and de Tournay, and Mademoiselle de Certeau, with a valet and a femme-de-chambre, who followed on horseback.

The news of their evasion reached Fontainebleau on the following evening, while the Queen was still convalescent (having given birth to her third and last daughter, Henriette Marie on the 26th of November); and the King was endeavouring to amuse the interval which must ensue before the arrival of the Princess by pursuing with renewed ardour his favourite pastime. Pimentello, the hated of Sully, had returned to court, and the play was consequently "fast and furious." It was in the very height of this maddening excitement, when he was surrounded by piles of gold, and devotees as earnest as himself at the same shrine discreetly assembled in his private closet, that Henry, whose spirits were exalted by his hopes, and who was risking sum after sum with a recklessness which would have taken away the breath of his finance-minister, received from M. d'Elbène,† and subsequently from his lieutenant of police, the important and mortifying intelligence that his destined prey had escaped him. The agitation which the King exhibited when convinced of the truth of this report, exceeded any that he had hitherto evinced even upon the most im-

* Dreux du Radier, vol. vii, pp. 115, 116.

† Alexander, Count d'Elbène, celebrated for his military talent and prowess, under Henry III. and Henry IV.

portant occasions, and hastily rising from the table, he murmured in the ear of Bassompierre who was seated next to him: "Ah! my friend, I am lost. The man has taken his wife into the depths of a forest. I know not if it be to escape with her from France, or to put her to death. Take care of my money, and keep up the play until I have procured more certain and detailed information."*

From his closet Henry proceeded to the last place on earth which might, under the circumstances, have been anticipated. He went straight to the chamber of the Queen, where her Majesty was still unable to leave her bed, and there he gave full scope to the anguish under which he was suffering. "Never," says Bassompierre; "did I see a man so lost or so overcome." In the room were also assembled the Marquis de Cœuvres,†

* Mémoires, p. 67.

† François Annibal d'Estrées, Marquis de Cœuvres, subsequently duke, peer, and marshal of France, was the son of Jean d'Estrées, grand-master of the artillery, and the representative of an ancient and illustrious family. He was born in 1563, originally entered the church, and became Bishop of Laon, to which see he was promoted by Henry IV. himself. He, however, some time afterwards abandoned the ecclesiastical profession, and embraced that of arms. In this new career he soon distinguished himself. In 1626, he relieved the Duke of Mantua, took Trèves, and made himself conspicuous alike by his valour and his talent. When appointed, in 1636, ambassador-extraordinary to Rome, he maintained the interests of his sovereign with energy and perseverance, and his frankness and decision caused a misunderstanding between himself and Urban VIII. On his recal to France, he refused to explain or to palliate his conduct, and

the Count de Cramail, and Messieurs d'Elbène and de Lomenie, with whom he unscrupulously discussed, in the presence of his outraged wife, the readiest means of compelling the immediate return of the fugitives. As may naturally be anticipated, the advice likely to prove the most flattering to his wishes was offered on all sides; and a thousand expedients were suggested and discussed only to be found unfeasible, until the King, in despair, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, resolved upon summoning his ministers. Accordingly MM. de Sillery, de Villeroy, de Jeannin, and de Sully soon joined the party, which had, moreover, been augmented by the presence of several of the most confidential friends of the monarch, among others by de Gèvres,* de la Force,† and la Varenne; and once more the King sought a solution of the difficulty. Here, however, the judgment and policy of the several councillors differed

died in 1670, leaving behind him the "Memoirs of the Regency of Marie de Medicis."

* Louis Portier, Marquis de Gèvres, was killed at the siege of Thionville in 1643.

† Jacques Nompar de Caumont, Duke de la Force, was the representative of a family which traced its descent from the eleventh century, and was the son of François, Seigneur de la Force, who fell during the massacre of St. Bartholomew. He bore arms in the Protestant army of Henry IV., and also placed himself at the head of the reformed party under Louis XIII., to whom, however, he surrendered, in 1622, and subsequently became marshal of France, and lieutenant-general of the army in Piedmont. He took Pignerol, defeated the Spaniards at Carignano in 1603, and possessed himself of several towns in Germany. He then returned to France, where he died in 1652.

upon every point. The chancellor gave it as his opinion that a strong declaration should be made against the step taken by the Prince himself, and another equally stringent against those by whom he should be aided and abetted in his evasion; M. de Villeroy advised that despatches should forthwith be forwarded to the several ambassadors of the French king at foreign courts, to warn the sovereigns of those states against receiving the fugitive Prince within their territories, and to exhort them to take measures for enforcing his return to France; M. Jeannin declared that the most expeditious method of compelling obedience, and forestalling the inconvenience and scandal of the self-expatriation of the first prince of the blood, would be to cause him to be immediately followed by a captain of the body-guard, instructed to expostulate with him on his disloyalty and imprudence, and to threaten instant war against any state by whom he should be harboured; while when Sully at length spoke, it was only to deprecate each and all of these measures, by which he insisted that the monarch would give an importance to the departure of the Prince that his enemies would but too gladly turn to their own account; whereas, if he made no comment upon the flight of M. de Condé, and treated it as a matter without importance, he would at once render him insignificant in the eyes of those sovereigns who would fain look upon him as a martyr, and use him as a means to harass and annoy his own monarch.

Henry was, however, too much excited to defer to the

sober reasonings of his finance-minister, and declared that he would suffer no petty Prince to harbour the first noble of his kingdom without resenting so gross an affront. The advice of Jeannin suited his views far better, and he accordingly dispatched M. de Praslin on the following day to Landrecies with a peremptory order for the return of the fugitives. His messenger was met by a firm refusal on the part of the Prince; upon which, finding that his expostulations were of no avail, he proceeded, as he had been ordered, to Brussels; where, in an interview with the Archduke Albert,* he delivered to him the message of his sovereign, and explained the danger of the position in which he would personally be placed should he venture to oppose the royal will.

This intelligence greatly embarrassed the Archduke, who had already given to M. de Rochefort an assurance of the readiness with which he would offer an asylum to the princely fugitives; but as M. de Praslin continued

* Albert, Archduke of Austria, was the sixth son of Maximilian II., and was born in 1559. In 1583 he was appointed Viceroy of Portugal, and in 1596 became Governor of the Low Countries under Philip II. He made himself master of Calais, Ardres, and Amiens, and married Isabelle Claire Eugenie, the daughter of the Spanish king, who brought him as her dowry the Catholic Low Countries and Franche-Comté, and thus renewed the war with Holland. Defeated at Newport by Maurice of Nassau in 1600, he possessed himself of Ostend in 1604, after a siege of three years, three months, and three days; but he was nevertheless compelled to conclude a truce of eight months in 1607, and another of twelve years in 1609. He died in 1621.

to press upon him the certain indignation of the French monarch should he venture to receive them at his court, his previous resolution gave way; and he hastened to dispatch a messenger to Landrecies to decline the honour proffered to him by M. de Condé, but at the same time to assure him of a safe passage through his territories. On the receipt of this unexpected prohibition the self-exiled Prince, who had gone too far to recede, had no other alternative than to proceed through the duchy of Juliers to Cologne; in which, being a free city, and perfectly neuter in the affairs of France and Spain, the chief magistrate granted him permission to reside.

Although the Prince de Condé had been refused a retreat in Flanders, the Archduke willingly yielded to the request of the Princess that she might be permitted to reside for a time at Brussels, until the final abode of her husband should be decided; and she accordingly arrived in that city under his escort, where the illustrious couple were received with great ceremony and cordiality by the Papal Nuncio, and the other dignitaries of the town. Their arrival was no sooner known than Philip of Orange and his Princess (the sister of M. de Condé) hastened from Breda to welcome them; and they were followed a few days afterwards by the Archduke and Archduchess, by whom the royal fugitives were entertained with all the honour due to their exalted rank, and their unmerited misfortunes. The Prince then took his departure for Cologne, while the fair cause of his flight remained

in the Flemish capital under the protection of her new friends.

Marie de Medicis had, meanwhile, no sooner ascertained that the embassy of M. de Praslin had been successful, and that the self-expatriated pair had been denied a refuge in the Low Countries, than she addressed a letter to the Marquis de Spinola, entreating him to cause a revocation of the denial, and representing how entirely her domestic peace depended upon the absence of the Princess de Condé; an absence which could not fail to be abridged by the necessity of residing in a city like Cologne, where the ardent spirit of the Prince would not fail to revolt at the tedium around him. The effect of her appeal was all that she had anticipated, strengthening as it did the pre-conceived measures of the confidential minister of Philip III., who hastened to represent to that monarch the gross error into which the Archduke had fallen, and the favourable opportunity which he had thus lost of retorting upon Henry the protection that he had accorded to Dom Antonio Perez, a traitor to his sovereign and to his country; and of securing to the court of Spain the advantage which it must have derived from having in its power, and securing to its interests, the first prince of the blood in France. His arguments proved conclusive; the jealousy of Philip always prompting him to lend a willing ear to every project by which he might be enabled to accomplish any triumph over the French monarch; and

accordingly instructions were forwarded to the Archduke to repair his fault without delay, by inviting the Prince to rejoin his bride at Brussels. Little as the sovereign of the Low Countries was disposed to involve himself in a war with France, he did not hesitate to comply with the injunction. He placed so firm a reliance on the support of Spain in the event of hostilities, and had been so long accustomed to conform to her counsels, that he immediately made known to M. de Condé his change of resolution, and declared himself ready to receive him whenever he should see fit to return to his territories; while at the same time he wrote to apprise the French king of what he had done, assuring him that the permission granted to the fugitive Prince involved no want of respect for himself or of deference to his wishes, but had been accorded in the full persuasion of his ultimate approval.

The Spanish minister also dispatched a messenger to the Prince, declaring that he was at liberty to take up his abode in the Low Countries, where he would be treated in a manner worthy of his birth and dignity, and, under the protection of the King his master, be assured of safety and respect. M. de Condé gladly availed himself of this permission, and a short time subsequently established himself in the palace of his sister, the Princess of Orange.

Enraged at this open violation of his wishes, and still reluctant to commence a war which he was conscious would rather owe its origin to private feeling

than to national expediency, Henry resolved, as a last resource, to invest M. de Cœuvres with full powers to treat with the revolted Prince; and for this purpose he furnished him with an autograph letter, in which he assured the fugitive of an unreserved pardon in the event of his immediate return to France; but threatened, should he persist in his contumacy, to declare him guilty of the crime of *lèse-majesté*. M. de Condé simply replied to this missive by a declaration of his innocence, and his respect for the person of the King; and by protesting against all that might be done to prejudice his interests; nor did the interviews which took place between himself and the royal envoy prove more satisfactory, although the marquis exerted all his eloquence to induce him to comply with the will of the sovereign. Moreover, the letter of Henry, instead of exciting his confidence, had rendered the Prince more suspicious than ever of the designs of the monarch; and he accordingly left Brussels, where he no longer considered himself safe, at the end of February (1610), and took refuge at Milan with the Count de Fuentes, the governor of that city.

More than one rumour had meanwhile reached the Archduchess that Madame de Condé was by no means so insensible to the degrading passion of the King as was befitting to her honour; and the Princess was accordingly soon made sensible that her sojourn at Brussels had degenerated into a species of ceremonious imprisonment. Naturally vain and volatile, dazzled

by the consciousness that she had become a species of heroine, and moreover saddened by her memories of the brilliant existence from which she had been so suddenly shut out, the widowed bride would gladly have followed her husband to the gayer city of Milan, even wounded as she was by his indifference and coldness, rather than remain at the austere court of the pious Infanta, where she was aware that her words and actions were subjected to the closest scrutiny; but the will of her father compelled her to remain at Brussels, the connétable being apprehensive, from the marked neglect and suspicion evinced towards her by the Prince, that he might endeavour to remove her beyond the reach of her friends in order to hold her more completely in his power. Under this impression he had consequently insisted upon her residence at the archducal court, and had instructed her to solicit the influence of the Infanta, and to employ every means in her own power, to prevent M. de Condé from effecting her removal in the event of his finding it himself expedient to leave Flanders.

Not satisfied with this precaution, moreover, M. de Montmorency also demanded an audience of the King, in which he laid before him the apprehensions that he entertained; and finally he entreated his Majesty's permission to compel his daughter to return to France, and to take up her residence with the Duchess d'Angoulême her aunt.

Henry made a ready and gracious reply to this

request, and before he finally retired from the royal closet, the connétable asked and obtained the royal sanction to authorise the Marquis de Cœuvres to concert with him some scheme for carrying off the Princess.

M. de Cœuvres had no sooner received these instructions than he admitted to his confidence Madame de Berny, the wife of the French ambassador at the Flemish court, (who from political reasons was himself kept in ignorance of the plot,) and M. de Châteauneuf,* who was at that period residing in Brussels on a special mission from his government; and the *quasi*-conspirators were not long ere they flattered themselves that their success was certain.

Near the palace of the Prince of Orange, in which Madame de Condé had taken up her residence, was a breach in the city wall by which it was easy to descend into the moat; and it was decided that the Princess should effect her escape from this point during the night. Saddle-horses were to be prepared for herself and her retinue near the outer bank of the ditch, and nothing remained undecided save the moment of her evasion. She was to proceed at all speed to Pontarmé, where a relay of fresh horses and an armed escort were to await her arrival, and similar arrangements were to be made throughout the whole of the route to Rocroy. Finally, the precise night of her flight was decided on; and this had no sooner been determined than M. de

* Réné de Sainte Marthe de Châteauneuf, who became keeper of the seals under the regency of Marie de Medicis.

Cœuvres dispatched a courier to the connétable, informing him that there now remained no doubt of the immediate return of the Princess to his protection.

This intelligence reached Paris on the Wednesday, and the following Saturday was the period fixed for the projected evasion; a fact which M. de Montmorency had no sooner ascertained than he hastened to communicate the success of M. de Cœuvres to the King. Henry was overjoyed, and in the fulness of his satisfaction was guilty of an indiscretion which was fated to overthrow his hopes; for believing that in so short a time no effectual measures could be taken to frustrate the plot, he was incautious enough to confide the whole conspiracy to the Queen, who was still an invalid, not having yet recovered the birth of her third daughter.* Agitated and alarmed, Marie listened to the narrative with an earnest attention, which only tended to render her royal consort more communicative than he might otherwise have been; and, in the excess of his self-gratulation, he moreover exhibited such unequivocal proofs of the interest which he personally felt in the result of the evasion, that she at once resolved to prevent the reappearance of the Princess in France. The King had accordingly no sooner quitted her apartment

* Madame Henriette Marie de France, who was married by procuration by the Cardinal de la Rochefoucault, in the cathedral of Notre-Dame, on the 11th of May, 1625, to Charles I. of England. This unfortunate Queen died suddenly, at her country-house, at Colombes, in 1669.

than she desired Madame Concini to bring her kinsman the Nuncio Ubaldini to her private closet without losing an instant; a command which was so zealously obeyed by her favourite that she was enabled, after a prolonged conference with this ecclesiastic, to dispatch a courier secretly to Spinola the same night, to acquaint him with the projected design, and to entreat him to frustrate it should there yet be time.

The royal messenger travelled so rapidly that he reached Brussels at eleven o'clock on the morning of Saturday; and Spinola had no sooner read the despatch than he hastened to communicate its contents to the Archduke and the Infanta, who instantly sent a company of the light horse of the body-guard to possess themselves of all the approaches to the palace of the Prince of Orange. This done, their Imperial Highnesses next caused several state carriages to be prepared, which were placed under the charge of one of the principal officers of their household, who received directions to invite Madame de Condé in their joint names, to take immediate possession of a suite of rooms in the palace which they desired to appropriate to her use and that of her suite, as better suited to the dignity of her high rank than those which she then inhabited. He was, moreover, instructed to accept no denial, but to insist upon the compliance of the Princess; and thus armed, the courtier proceeded to the Hôtel d'Orange, where he communicated the subject of his mission to Madame de Condé, in the presence of her two confidants. The

consternation of the whole party may be imagined, when, just as they conceived themselves secure of success, they thus discovered that their design had been betrayed; nor was it until the Princess had exhausted every subterfuge she could invent that she found herself compelled to accompany the archducal envoy. It was in vain that she represented the greater propriety of her residence under the roof of her husband's sister during that husband's absence; she was assured that she would find the palace equally eligible, and far more worthy of her occupation. She then pleaded her reluctance to intrude further upon the splendid hospitality of her princely hosts; her objection was met by an assurance that so eager were the sovereigns to receive her as a guest that they were even at that moment waiting in the greatest anxiety to bid her welcome; an intimation which served to convince Madame de Condé that she had no alternative save to submit to this civil tyranny, and that upon the instant. She accordingly summoned her attendants; and without having been permitted to hold any private communication with her equally discomfited friends, she entered the carriage assigned to her, and was rapidly driven to the palace.*

The indignation of the Prince de Condé equalled the mortification of the King when he learnt the failure of the projected evasion; while the Marquis de Cœuvres

* Daniel, vol. vii, pp. 502, 503, by whom these details were obtained from manuscript letters in the library of the Abbé d'Estrées.

and M. de Berny demanded an audience of the Archduke at which they loudly complained of the insults to which the Princess had been subjected, and which were, as they alleged, calculated to strengthen the odious suspicions that had already been generated against the King their master. M. de Berny, who was entirely ignorant of the plot, was naturally the loudest in his denunciations of the violence offered to Madame de Condé, and the species of captivity to which she was condemned, when she had been led to expect nothing but consideration for her rank, and sympathy for her misfortunes. He, moreover, assured the Archduke that nothing could be more wild and absurd than the idea of her flight; warmly demanding wherefore she was likely to leave a capital wherein she had hitherto been so well and so generously received.

The genuine indignation of the ambassador produced as little effect upon the Archduke as the laboured arguments of M. de Cœuvres; and he contented himself by courteously regretting that an attention, intended to convey to the Princess the extent of the respect and friendship with which she had inspired him, should have been so ill-interpreted; adding, moreover, that far from disapproving the step which he had taken, he felt convinced that the French king would recognise in it only his earnest desire to do honour to the first princess of the blood. Further argument was useless; the imperturbable composure of the Archduke totally overpowering the wordy violence of his interlocutors,

who were eventually compelled to withdraw without having effected the restoration of Madame de Condé. On the return of the Marquis de Cœuvres to Paris, Henry, still believing that the Archduke would not venture to brave his displeasure by any further opposition to his will, accredited M. de Preau* to the court of Brussels, with instructions to demand the immediate return of the Princess in the joint names of the duke her father and Madame d'Angoulême her aunt; but this new procuration was met by the Austrian Prince with the declaration that he had pledged himself to M. de Condé not to permit the Princess to leave Brussels without his consent, and that he consequently could not without dishonour forfeit his plighted word.

Exasperated by a firmness for which he was unprepared, and satisfied that the support of the Spanish cabinet could alone have induced the Archduke thus to drive him to extremities, Henry at once resolved no longer to delay the hostilities which he had long meditated against Spain, and to which he was now urged as much by private feeling as by state policy. A sufficient pretext offered itself, moreover, in the efforts which had been made by several of the German princes to possess themselves of the duchies of Clèves and Juliers; the death of Jean Guillaume, Duke of Clèves, Juliers, and Bergh, Count de la Mark, and Lord of Ravenstein, which had occurred on the 25th of March,

* Hector de Preau was a Calvinist nobleman, and Governor of Chatellerault.

and the numerous claims made upon his succession, having rendered the ultimate disposition of his duchy a matter of extreme importance to Henry, who was reluctant to strengthen the power of Austria by permitting this increase of territory to pass definitely into her hands,* as it had already partially done, the Emperor having hastened to place the duchy under sequestration.

The petty sovereigns thus despoiled protested energetically against such an usurpation; and several among them had even entreated the protection of France, to the great gratification of Henry IV., who thus found himself doubly armed, as his interference in behalf of the aggrieved princes assured their co-operation in his own project of recovering from the Emperor the provinces of Franche-Comté and Flanders, which had been in the possession of Spain since the time of Charles V.; and which had formed, as we have elsewhere stated, the dowry of the Infanta on her marriage with the Archduke Albert. Thus, in the eyes of Europe the French King was about to engage in this new war simply to enforce justice to himself and his allies; but it was so evident to all who considered the subject that these pretensions might have been put down at once by the slightest show of resistance on his own part, and that so comparatively unimportant a campaign might prudently

* Mezeray, vol. x, p. 374.

have been intrusted to one of his many able generals, that when it became known that an army of forty thousand infantry, six thousand Swiss, the body-guard, and a corps of four thousand mounted nobles, together with a strong park of artillery, were about to take the field under the command of the King in person, there were few individuals acquainted with the circumstances which we have just narrated, who did not feel convinced that the monarch was rather about to undertake a crusade for the deliverance of the Princess de Condé than a war for the preservation of his territories.

This opinion was, moreover, strengthened by the fact that throughout all these hostile preparations Henry did not discontinue his negociations for the return of Madame de Condé to France. He pleaded the authority of her father; the anxiety of her more than mother, the Duchess d'Angoulême; his own authority over his subjects; the inclination of the Princess herself to be once more under the protection of her family; but all these pretexts signally failed. Yet neither Henry nor his agent M. de Preau would yield to discouragement; passion on the one hand, and ambition on the other, lent them strength to persevere; and having exhausted their first scheme of attack, they next represented the necessity of her presence at the approaching coronation of the Queen, where it was important that she should occupy the position suited to her rank as first princess of the blood; and next, they alleged the impossibility of furthering her views in the separation from her husband

which she was about to demand, unless she were enabled personally to expose her reasons to the Parliament. Moreover, Madame de Condé had written to the French ministers, to complain of violence and imprisonment, and the King insisted upon the necessity of her liberation.

De Preau, however, zealous as he was, made no impression upon the firmness of the Archduke. The Spanish cabinet had rendered itself responsible for his opposition, and he defied the menaces of France; a circumstance which decided Henry upon immediate war. The resolution which he had taken of heading the army in person, determined him, before his departure from France, solemnly to invest the Queen with the title of Regent during his absence; but the precautions which he took to name an efficient council, by whom she was to be assisted in the government of the kingdom, excited the indignation and resentment of her personal favourites, especially of Concini, who thus saw himself rendered powerless when he had hoped to assert his influence, and to improve his fortunes; and under the pressure of this disappointment he hastened to represent to his royal mistress the utter emptiness of the dignity with which Henry proposed to invest her.

"You are an uncrowned Queen;" he said; "and you are about to become a powerless Regent. Thus, Madam, you will be known by two high-sounding titles, neither of which will in reality appertain to you. Cause yourself to be crowned, and then you

will indeed possess the authority which is your due, and the honour of which you have heretofore been unjustly deprived. Cease to be a puppet in the hands of a faithless husband; and at least compel this coming war, undertaken for the recovery of a new mistress, to be the means of establishing your own rightful position."

This advice was eagerly accepted by Marie, whose ambition had at length been aroused by a consideration of the failing health and advanced age of the King, and the prospect afforded by the extreme youth of the Dauphin of a protracted minority: and she consequently hastened to express to Henry her earnest desire to feel herself in reality Queen of France before his departure from the kingdom, in order that she might not have to apprehend any neglect of her legitimate authority upon the part of the ministers whom he had selected to share with her the burthen of state affairs. The monarch, who had hitherto refused to listen to every suggestion which had been made to him of the propriety of showing this mark of consideration to his royal consort, was even less inclined to make the concession at this particular moment, when the expenses of his meditated campaign had been estimated at twelve hundred and fifty monthly livres for the support of his own troops, and an equal sum for those of his allies,* and he replied with considerable warmth

* Mezeray, vol. x, p. 384.

that she had chosen her time for such a request most injudiciously, since she must be aware that he had neither the time nor the funds necessary to the indulgence of so puerile a vanity. The Queen, however, urged by her advisers, resolutely returned to the charge, declaring that she could assume no prominent position in the temporary government of the kingdom while her own remained so vague and undefined. She reminded him, moreover, of the uncomplaining patience with which she had awaited his pleasure upon this particular; a patience which, as she asserted, she could still have exercised, had he not been about to cross the frontier; but which, under existing circumstances, she now considered as weak and pusillanimous in the mother of three princes.*

"At length, however," says Bassompierre, whose own more than questionable morality did not permit him to enact the censor upon his sovereign; "as he was the best husband in the world, he finished by giving his consent, and delayed his departure until she should have made her public entry into the capital."†

On retiring to his closet, the King declared to one or two of his confidential friends, as he had already done on former occasions when the same question had been mooted, that the actual cause of the repugnance which he felt to accede to the wishes of the Queen,

* Mezeray, vol. x, p. 387. L'Etoile, vol. iv, p. 16.

† Mémoires, p. 70.

arose from a firm conviction that her coronation would cost him his life, and that he should never leave Paris in safety, as his enemies could only hope to triumph by depriving him of existence.*

"Assuredly," pursues the quaint old chronicler from whom we have just quoted; "heaven and earth had given us only too many prognostics of what was to happen to him: it was in the year 1608 that a great eclipse nearly covered the whole body of the sun; in the preceding year 1607 that the terrible comet appeared; after which some three months or thereabout we had two earthquakes: then several monsters born in divers provinces of France; bloody rains that fell at Orleans and at Troy; the great plague that afflicted Paris in the past year 1609; the furious overflowing of the Loire; next the Curé of Montargis found upon the altar, when he went to celebrate the mass, a scroll by which he was informed that his Majesty would be killed by a determined blow; and the said Curé of Montargis carried the paper to the Duke de Sully. Several conspiracies," he goes on to say; "must have been formed against the life of this good King, since from twenty quarters he received notice of it. The Pope Paul V. sent him a courier express, to warn him to be upon his guard, as very high and powerful ladies and some of the greatest nobles of his court were involved in a plot against his life."†

* Rambure, MS. Mem., vol. vi, pp. 27, 28.

† Idem, pp. 28, 29.

What reason the King may have supposed himself to possess for considering his own death to be consequent upon the coronation of Marie, or whether he did actually so combine the two events in his own mind, it were impossible for posterity to decide; but it is at least certain that Rambure himself is not singular in adducing extraordinary coincidences, and in lending his support to these superstitious terrors; for it is on record that the Cardinal Barberino, who subsequently (in 1623) became Pope under the title of Urban VIII., and who was, at the period of which we now write, celebrated for his acquaintance with the occult sciences, as well as for his skill in astrology, sent a message to the King in the month of January, by which he cautioned him not to sojourn in any large city throughout the whole of the year, but more especially during the months of March, April, May, June, and July; declaring that, should he disregard the warning, he would be assassinated by an unfrocked monk of saturnine temperament, born in his own kingdom; and adding that he would do well, carefully to ascertain whether any individual answering to this description were then residing within his dominions, in order that should such an one be discovered, he might be closely watched; and he moreover, concluded by assuring the monarch that if he would submit to absent himself from all the great cities of his kingdom during the months specified, he (the cardinal) would answer with his life that he should escape the threatened peril.

This intimation, extraordinary as it seems, was, however, insignificant beside another which reached Henry at the same period through the Marquis Dufresne, his ambassador at the court of Constantinople, who was instructed by the Sultan to desire him to take off the heads of the six principal nobles of his nation immediately on the receipt of his letter; and to be upon his guard against the greatest lady in his dominions, as well as against three persons who were in her confidence, whom he advised him to imprison during their lives, the whole of them being implicated in the plot.*

Both these communications may, however, find a probable solution in the circumstance of their having been made by individuals who had obtained information of a conspiracy against the life of the French king; a supposition rendered the more rational by the fact, that although aware of the formidable army then organised in France, the Austrians made no preparation to resist a force which they were conscious was to be used against themselves; an inertness which could only be accounted for by the supposition that they were about to employ other and surer methods of evading the threatened evil.† But in addition to these probably political prophecies, others of a still more singular nature were made to Henry of his approaching fate. A young female named Anne de Comans voluntarily

* Rambure, MS. Mém., vol. vi, pp. 29, 30.

† Mezeray, vol. x, p. 385.

declared that a fatal conspiracy had been organised, whose avowed object was to terminate the existence of the monarch by violence; and even after his death she persisted in maintaining the truth of her assertion, not only orally but in writing; for which persistence she was pronounced to be insane, and so closely confined in an asylum for lunatics as actually to become in a few months the madwoman which she had been represented, although it would appear that great doubts were entertained as to her previous hallucination.* Six months before his death the King being in the house of Zamet, retired immediately that he had dined to a private apartment, whence he sent to summon Thomassin, one of the most celebrated astrologers of the time, whom he interrogated respecting his own future destiny and that of his kingdom. In reply he was warned as usual to beware of the approaching month of May; and at length, irritated by his scepticism, the professor of the black art predicted to him not only the day but the very hour which was to terminate his existence.†

A short time subsequently a nobleman of Bearn arrived in Paris, and requested an audience of the King, which he had no sooner obtained than he informed him that he had been instructed in a vision to seek his presence in order to warn him of his approaching death. Henry, however, who piqued himself in public upon denying credence to these supernatural revelations, and

* Mezeray, vol. x, pp. 385, 376.

† Mém. pour l'Hist. de France, vol. ii, p. 309.

who moreover imagined that the object of his countryman was to obtain a recompense for his zeal, treated the matter lightly, and ordered three hundred crowns to be presented to the stranger to defray his travelling expenses. This present he, however, respectfully refused, protesting that he had acted only upon a principle of duty, and that he should be amply recompensed should his warning suffice to induce the monarch to adopt efficient precautions to enable him to escape the threatened peril.*

Only a few nights previous to her coronation the Queen suddenly awoke from a profound slumber uttering a piercing shriek, and trembling in every limb. Alarmed by her evident state of agony, the monarch having at length succeeded in restoring her to a state of comparative composure, urged her to explain the cause of her alarm, but for a considerable time she refused to yield to his entreaties. Overcome at last, however, by his evident anxiety and uneasiness, she informed him that she had just had a frightful dream, in which she had seen him fall under the knife of an assassin.†

Two remarkable coincidences also demand mention, particularly as they occurred at a distance from the capital. On the day of the King's assassination his shield, bearing his blazon, which was attached to the principal entrance of the château of Pau in Bearn, fell

* Dupleix, p. 411.

† L'Etoile, vol. iv, p. 31, n.

heavily to the ground, and broke to pieces; while immediately afterwards the cows of the royal herd, which had previously been grazing quietly in the park, began to low in a frightful manner; and suddenly the bull known as *the king* rushed violently against the gate whence the trophy had fallen, and then sprang into the moat, where it was drowned. The effect produced upon the inhabitants of the district was instantaneous; loud and lamentable shouts of "The King is dead!" arose on all sides; and within two hours every Bernese felt convinced that his beloved monarch had ceased to exist.*

It is useless to multiply these strange tales; but it is certain that they did not fail in their effect upon the mind of the monarch, however he might struggle to conceal the feelings which they excited; for Bassompierre relates that during the preparations which were making for the coronation of the Queen, Henry repeatedly alluded to his approaching death, with a sadness which evinced his entire belief in the predictions that had reached him.

"I know not wherefore, Bassompierre," he said on one occasion; "but I am persuaded that I shall never again see Germany, nor do I believe that you will go to Italy. I shall not live much longer.

On the 1st of May, when returning from the Tuileries by the great gallery to the Louvre, supported in consequence of his gout by the Duke de Guise and

* Mezeray, vol. x, pp. 390, 391.

the narrator himself, he said on reaching the door of the Queen's closet to his two attendants: "Wait for me here. I will hasten the toilette of my wife that she may not keep my dinner waiting." He was of course obeyed; and the duke and Bassompierre, in order to while away the time, walked to the balcony that overhung the court of the Louvre, against which they leant watching what passed below; when suddenly the great hawthorn which occupied the centre of the area swayed for an instant, and then fell to the earth with a loud crash in the direction of the King's private staircase without any apparent agency, as not a breath of air was stirring, nor was any one near it at the time.

The impressionable imagination of Bassompierre was deeply moved. "Would," he exclaimed to his companion; "that any sacrifice on my part could have averted so dire a presage as this. God preserve the King!"

"You are mad," was the reply of the duke; "to connect the fortunes of the King with the fall of a tree."

"It may be so;" was the melancholy rejoinder; "but neither in Italy nor in Germany would this circumstance fail to produce alarm. Heaven guard the monarch and all who are near and dear to him!"

"You are two fools to amuse yourselves with these absurd prognostics;" said Henry, who had approached them unheard during their momentary excitement. "For the last thirty years all the astrologers and mountebanks in the kingdom, as well as a host of other

impostors, have predicted at given intervals that I was about to die; so that when the time comes some of these prophecies must prove correct, and will be quoted as miracles, while all the false ones will be studiously forgotten."

The young nobles received the rebuke in silence; but the inexplicable accident which had just occurred was sufficient in so superstitious an age to arouse the liveliest forebodings in the minds of those by whom it was witnessed.*

* Bassompierre, Mém., p. 70. Rambure, MS. Mém., vol. vi, p. 33.

CHAPTER IX.

[1610.]

PREPARATIONS FOR THE CORONATION OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—WHEREFORE DEFERRED—THEY ARE RESUMED—THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINT DENIS—GORGEOUS COUP D'ŒIL—THE PROCESSION—INDIGNATION OF THE EX-QUEEN MARGUERITE—THE COUNT AND COUNTESS DE SOISSONS LEAVE PARIS—MAGNIFICENCE OF MARIE DE MEDICIS AND HER COURT—THE CORONATION — THE QUEEN IS AFFECTIONATELY RECEIVED BY THE KING ON REACHING THE PALACE—THE BANQUET—THE COURT RETURNS TO THE LOUVRE—LAST ADVICE GIVEN BY THE KING TO THE QUEEN-REGENT—GLOOMY FOREBODINGS — THE QUEEN'S TOILET — THE DUKE DE VENDÔME AND THE ASTROLOGER—THE KING'S COACH—ASSASSINATION OF HENRY IV. — THE QUEEN AND THE CHANCELLOR — THE ROYAL CHILDREN ARE PLACED UNDER THE CARE OF M. DE VITRY—EXAMINATION OF THE ROYAL BODY—THE KING'S HEART—THE STATE BIER—THE ROYAL FUNERAL.

CHAPTER IX.

[1610.]

HAVING resolved that the coronation of the Queen should take place before his departure for Germany, and being anxious to commence the projected campaign with the least possible delay, Henry named the 5th of May as the day on which the ceremony was to be performed; but having learnt from a private despatch that the Archduke had resolved at the eleventh hour not to incur the hazard of a war with France upon so frivolous a pretext as the forcible retention of a princess, who, moreover, remained under his charge against her own free will; and that Madame de Condé was accordingly about to return to the French court, he resolved to defer the pageant until the advent of the fair fugitive who would, as he felt, constitute its brightest ornament. The succeeding courier from the Low Countries, however, dispelled this brilliant vision. Whatever might have been the personal inclination

of the Archduke, Philip of Spain determined to retain his hostage; and the return of the Princess to France was interdicted. Enraged by the deceit which had been practised upon him, but unwilling to forfeit his word to the Queen, Henry had no alternative save to order the instant renewal of the preparations which he had himself suspended; and despite the entreaties of the municipal authorities of Paris, who represented the impossibility of completing their arrangements before the end of the month, he persisted in his resolution of causing the Queen to be crowned on the 13th, and commanded her public entry into Paris for the following Sunday.*

On the 11th (Tuesday) he said to those around him: "I shall sleep at St. Denis to-morrow night, and return to Paris on Thursday; I shall arrange all my private affairs on Friday; on Saturday I shall drive about the city; Sunday will be the state entry of the Queen; on Monday my daughter de Vendôme will be married; on Tuesday the banquet will take place; and on Wednesday I mount for Germany."†

The court accordingly slept at St. Denis on the night of the 12th, in order to be in readiness for the ceremony of the morrow; and the morning of the eventful day which was to witness the crowning triumph of Marie de Medicis at length dawned. A brilliant spring sun robed the earth in brightness; but nowhere

* L'Etoile, vol. iv, pp. 17, 18. Montfaucon, vol. v, p. 429.

† Matthieu, vol. 9361 of the royal manuscripts, p. 804.

did it light up a scene of greater magnificence than when, filtered through the windows of stained glass, it poured itself in a living mosaic over the marble pavement of the cathedral, and flashed upon the sumptuous hangings and golden draperies which were distributed over the spacious area of the edifice. Immediately in front of the high altar a platform had been erected eleven feet in height, and upwards of twenty feet square, in the centre of which was a daïs richly carpeted, supporting the throne of the Queen, covered with crimson velvet embroidered with *fleurs-de-lis* in gold, and overshadowed by a canopy of the same material. On either side of this throne two other platforms were appropriated to the princes of the blood, the knights of the several orders, the gentlemen of the bedchamber, the great nobles, the foreign ambassadors, and the ladies of the Queen's household. Within the altar-rail on the left hand, a bench draped with cloth of gold was prepared for the cardinals; and behind this was a second bench reserved for the archbishops, bishops, and other ecclesiastics who were to assist at the ceremony; while on the same side of the shrine stood a table overlaid by a costly drapery, upon which were to be deposited the crown, the coronet, the sceptre, the hand of justice, and the ring destined to be employed during the ceremony. On the right hand of the altar was placed an oratory covered with violet velvet bordered and fringed with gold, upon which were placed two cushions of the same material for the use of

the Cardinal de Joyeuse who was to officiate; and behind this was a table corresponding with that on the left, and covered by a similar drapery, supporting the bread, wine, and waxen tapers which the master of the ceremonies was instructed to deliver to the ladies who were selected to make the offering for the Queen.

The floor of the choir extending from the principal platform to the high altar, was carpeted with crimson velvet edged with gold; and above this was stretched a second drapery of cloth of gold for the passage of her Majesty; myriads of lights were grouped about the lateral shrines, the carved columns of the solemn edifice were veiled by magnificent hangings, and the gorgeous vestments of the prelates cumbered the open presses of the sacristy.

An hour after dawn a compact crowd peopled the vast interior of St. Denis; persons of all ranks, from the artisan to the petty noble and his family, rushed tumultuously towards the sacred edifice, in order to secure a sight of the august solemnity; and great was the surprise of all to find themselves already preceded by the King, who came and went throughout the early part of the morning, superintending every arrangement in person; and apparently overlooking his bodily ailments in the extraordinary excitement under which he laboured.

The Dauphin, Madame the elder Princess, the ex-Queen Marguerite, the princes of the blood, and great dignitaries, who were summoned to assist at the cere-

mony, accompanied by the Cardinals of Gondy and Sourdis, proceeded at an early hour to the Louvre to conduct the Queen to the cathedral; and it was no sooner announced that her Majesty was prepared to set forth than the procession formed.

The ceremonial had not, however, been definitively arranged without considerable difficulty. Marguerite, who, whatever might be her errors, could not contemplate her presence at this solemnity as a mere spectator without considerable heart-burning, considered herself aggrieved by the fact that instead of following immediately behind the Queen, she was to be preceded by Madame Elisabeth, still a mere child; and so great was her indignation at this discovery, that she was very reluctantly induced to abandon her intention of pretexting illness, and absenting herself entirely from the pageant. The earnest remonstrances of her friends, who represented to her the certainty of the King's serious displeasure, alone determined her to sacrifice her dignity; and although she ultimately consented to submit to an arrangement which she considered as an encroachment upon her rights as the daughter of a long line of sovereigns, rather than draw down upon herself the resentment of the monarch, she wept bitterly while she prepared to swell the retinue of her successor.* The Count de Soissons was less compliant; for it was no sooner announced to him that

* Dupleix, p. 403.

the Duchess de Vendôme, the wife of the King's natural son, was to appear in a mantle embroidered with *fleurs-de-lis* similar to those worn by the princesses of the blood, than he loudly declared that he would not countenance so disgraceful an innovation; and having ordered his household to prepare for an instant departure from Paris, he left the capital with the Princess his wife, and retired to one of his country seats.*

Despite this secession, however, the suite of Marie de Medicis was one of supreme magnificence. The procession was opened by the Swiss guards, habited in velvet vests of her own colours, tawny, blue, crimson, and white; then followed two companies, each composed of a hundred nobles, the first wearing habiliments of tawny-coloured satin braided with gold, and the second pourpoints of white satin and breeches of tawny colour; these were succeeded by the lords of the bedchamber, chamberlains, and other great officers of the royal household, superbly attired; who were, in their turn, followed by the knights of the Holy Ghost wearing the collar of their Order. A body of trumpeters walked after them richly dressed in blue velvet; and then came the heralds in full armour, and the ushers of the chamber with their maces.

When these had passed the more important personages of the procession issued from the gates of the

* L'Etoile, vol. iv, p. 30.

Louvre; and the glorious spring sun flashed upon the jewelled caps and capes of the princes of the blood, glistened over their vests of cloth of gold, and toyed with the gemmed hilts of their diamond-studded weapons. Preceding the Queen were the Prince de Conti, and the Count d'Anquien;* while immediately before her walked the Dauphin clad in a habit of cloth of silver, profusely ornamented with precious stones; and then came Marie herself, in the full glory of conscious dignity and triumph, wearing a coronet of jewels, a richly-gemmed stomacher, a surcoat of ermine, and a royal mantle seven aunes in length, composed of purple velvet embroidered with *fleurs-de-lis* in gold and diamonds, and bordered with ermine, which was borne on either side of her by the two cardinals, and at its extremity by the dowager Princess de Condé,† the Princess de Conti, the dowager Duchess

* Charles de Bourbon Conti, Count d'Anquien, son of the Duke de Soissons.

† Charlotte Catherine de la Trémouille, Princess-dowager de Condé, was the daughter of Louis III., Seigneur de la Trémouille, and was born in 1568. The Prince de Condé, the chief of the Protestant party, enamoured of her beauty, made her his wife in 1586; and having died by poison two years subsequently, suspicion fell upon the Princess and some of her confidential attendants, several of whom were put to death as accessories to the crime. Madame de Condé herself was imprisoned, and, despite her protestations of innocence, was not set at liberty for upwards of seven years, when she was at length liberated by Henry IV. (1596). She died in 1629.

de Montpensier, and the Duchess de Mercœur;* whose trains were in like manner supported by four nobles habited in cloth of gold and silver, and covered with jewels.

Then followed Madame Elisabeth of France and the ex-Queen Marguerite, wearing mantles covered with *fleurs-de-lis* embroidered in gold, carried by four nobles richly attired, with their capes and caps laced with jewels; and the gorgeous train was finally closed by the princesses of the blood and duchesses, whose trains were in like manner borne by some of the principal noblemen of the court. All these ladies wore their coronets enriched with pearls and diamonds, save such as were widows, to whom the use of gems was interdicted by the fashion of the age.

To these succeeded the ladies of the Queen's household, among whom the Marquise de Guercheville† and Madame de Concini excited the most curiosity; the latter from the high favour which she enjoyed, and the extraordinary elevation to which it had conduced; and the former from a cause infinitely more honourable to her as a woman. While the widow of her first husband, Henry de Selly, Count de la Rochepot, her

* Marie de Luxembourg, the daughter of Sébastian de Luxembourg, Duke de Penthièvre, and Viscount de Martigues, and wife of Philip Emmanuel de Lorraine, Duke de Mercœur.

† Antoinette de Pons, Marquise de Guercheville, whose second husband was Charles du-Plessis, Seigneur de Liancourt, first equerry, and Governor of Paris.

grace and beauty attracted Henry IV., who pertinaciously endeavoured to win her affections. His degrading suit was, however, so resolutely although respectfully rejected, that the King, impressed by her merit, on one occasion declared that the title which would be the most applicable to her would be that of a lady of honour, and that such she should become whenever another Queen ascended the throne of France. The marquise curtsied her thanks, without attaching any importance to so very prospective a distinction; but six years subsequently, when the court of Marie de Medicis was formed, the promised appointment was conferred upon her; and she fulfilled the duties of her office with a dignified and unobtrusive zeal which secured to her the esteem and respect of her royal mistress.*

Thus escorted, Marie de Medicis entered the cathedral; where, having been conducted to the front of the high altar, she knelt upon a cushion near which stood the Cardinal de Joyeuse in his pontifical robes, surrounded by a group of high ecclesiastical dignitaries, and supported by the Cardinal Duperron. When the Queen had concluded her prayer, and kissed the reliquary which was presented to her by M. de Joyeuse, she was led to her throne in the same state as that with which she had approached the altar; and she had no sooner taken her place than the Dauphin seated himself

* Remarques sur l'Invention de la Bibliothèque de M. Guillaume, art. 33.

in the chair which had been prepared for him; and Madame and the ex-Queen, followed by the princesses of the blood, and the great ladies of the court, after having successively made a profound curtsey to the Queen, followed his example. This done the Cardinals of Gondy and Sourdis descended from the platform, and took up their position on the left of the altar, while the princes were marshalled to their places by the royal ushers; and meanwhile the musicians of her Majesty performed divers melodies suited to the place and the occasion.

After the lapse of a few moments the two cardinals again ascended the platform to reconduct her Majesty to the altar, which she reached in the same order as she had previously done, save that the Dauphin now walked on her right hand and Madame Elisabeth upon her left. Having knelt as before in silent prayer, she was ultimately raised by the Prince and Princess, and stood with her head bowed upon her breast while the Cardinal de Joyeuse commenced the appropriate orisons, and received from the hand of two of the bishops the vase containing the holy oil, and the platen. Having poured out a portion of the former, the prelate anointed the Queen upon the head and chest; after which he received from a third bishop the consecrated ring, which he placed upon her finger.

The sceptre and the hand of justice were then tendered to him, and transferred to the august recipient; and finally the crown of state was presented upon a

cushion, and held above her head by the Dauphin and Madame Elisabeth, by whom it was subsequently consigned to the keeping of the Prince de Conti, while another of smaller size, enriched with a profusion of diamonds, rubies, and pearls of immense value was placed upon her brow; and Marie de Medicis at length stood in the midst of her assembled court the crowned and anointed Queen of France.

A vigorous flourish of trumpets proclaimed the termination of the ceremony. Marie resigned the sceptre and the hand of justice to the two princes who stood next to her, and once more ascended the throne; where she was no sooner seated than M. de Conti placed before her the crown of state which he had carried upon a stool covered with cloth of gold, and knelt beside it. The Prince who bore the sceptre then assumed the same attitude on the right hand of the Queen, and his companion carrying the hand of justice upon her left. A solemn high mass was next performed, and at its close the herald-at-arms cast, in the Queen's name, a shower of gold and silver coin among the crowds who thronged the church: while Marie herself, descending from the platform, and attended as before, slowly left the sacred edifice, and returned to the robing-room.

The King, who had witnessed the whole ceremony from his private tribune, was more rapid in his movements, and hastened to regain his chamber; whence he watched the brilliant procession as it advanced, with an undisguised delight that was inexplicable to those who

were aware of the reluctance with which he had yielded to the desire of the Queen; and who had consequently anticipated no demonstration on his part save one of irritation and annoyance. Greatly therefore were they surprised when as she passed beneath the window at which he had taken up his station, they saw him scatter some perfumed water on her head in order to induce her to look up; after which he hurriedly descended the great staircase to receive and welcome her, and with every possible exhibition of affection and respect conducted her to the hall in which the banquet had been prepared.

Throughout this sumptuous repast the gaiety of the monarch excited the comments of all by whom he was surrounded; and it was generally remarked that he had not for many months yielded to such an effervescence of spirits. At length, however, the festival drew to its close; lords and ladies were alike overwhelmed by the fatigues of the past day; and their Majesties, having taken a gracious leave of their illustrious guests, entered one of the royal carriages, and proceeded to the Louvre.*

The numerous foreigners who had assembled from every part of Europe in order to witness the ceremony, were lost in astonishment at the profusion of jewels displayed upon the occasion, declaring that they had never before witnessed such a spectacle; and that even at the world-famed entry of the Spanish Queen into

* Mercure Français, 1610, pp. 419—423.

Madrid, where Italy and Spain had alike exhibited all their riches, they could not be compared with those possessed by the French court alone; nor was their surprise diminished when they learnt that on the following Sunday, when Marie de Medicis was to enter Paris in state, they would be convinced that they had not as yet seen a tithe of the splendour which the great nobles and ladies of the kingdom were enabled to display upon such occasions.*

From the moment in which the King decided upon personally superseding the Maréchal de Lesdiguières† in his command of the army in Champagne, he had been unwearied in his advice to the Queen for the efficient government of the country. He exhorted her to great caution in changing her ministers, earnestly impressing upon her the danger of intrusting state affairs to individuals whose probity and experience were not well assured, or of displacing others without great and serious cause. He moreover especially besought her never to permit the interference of foreigners in the

*. Mercure Français, 1610, p. 423.

† François de Bonne, Duke de Lesdiguières, was born at St. Bonnet, in Upper Dauphiny, in 1543. He became general of the Huguenots, and obtained several victories over the Catholic troops. On the accession of Henry IV. to the French throne, that Prince appointed him lieutenant-general of his armies in Piedmont, Savoy, and Dauphiny. His success in Savoy was brilliant, and he was created Marshal of France in 1608. Four years subsequently he embraced the Romish faith; and died in 1626 with the title of Connétable.

internal economy of the kingdom, as by such ill-placed confidence she could not fail to alienate from herself the affections of all true Frenchmen; to uphold the authority of the Parliament, but on no account to countenance its dictation, confining its operations to their legitimate sphere, and enforcing its submission to her own delegated supremacy; never to suffer herself to be misled by her passions or prejudices, but to weigh all her measures maturely before she insisted upon their enforcement; to protect the Jesuits, but at the same time to be careful not to allow them to increase their numbers, or to form establishments upon the frontiers; to attach the nobility by favours which could not endanger the interests of the throne, but to be cautious in her concessions where they might tend to any undue aggrandisement of their former power and influence; and, above all, not rashly to undertake any war against the Huguenots until she had received full assurance of being enabled to terminate it successfully. As regarded the Dauphin, he declared that his greatest desire was to see him the husband of Mademoiselle de Lorraine, provided the duke should not have other children; as, in such case, the French nation would be aggrandised by the territories of a state from which it had received much and grievous injury. He expressed, moreover, the greatest repugnance to the proposed marriage between Madame Elisabeth and the Infant of Spain, alleging as his reason the perpetual rivalry of the two powers, and the circumstance that the prosperity of the one must

necessarily involve the abasement of the other; and finally he declared that were he compelled to give the hand of his daughter to a Spanish prince, it should be to a younger brother who might be declared Duke of Flanders, and not to the heir to the throne.*

The Queen, while listening to these counsels, did not cease her entreaties that he would abandon his intention of quitting the kingdom, and leave the conduct of the campaign to his generals. She represented her own inexperience in state affairs, the extreme youth of the Dauphin, and the long life which he himself might still enjoy if he did not voluntarily place himself in situations of peril, which was the less required of him as he had already established his fame as a soldier throughout the whole of Europe. Henry answered only by a jest. Love and ambition alike lured him on; and beneath their baneful influence prudence and reason were silenced.†

On the morning succeeding the coronation of his royal consort, the King attended mass at the church of the Feuillans, where he was accompanied by the Duke de Guise and M. de Bassompierre; and as he was still in the same exuberant spirits as on the preceding day, a great deal of light and desultory conversation took place during their return to the palace; which was, however, abruptly terminated by Henry, whose coun-

* Richelieu, La Mère et le Fils, vol. i, pp. 27—32.

† Idem, pp. 24, 25.

tenance became suddenly overcast as he said in reply to a gay remark made by M. de Guise:

"Even you do not understand me now; but one of these days, when I am dead, you will learn my value."

"My God! Sire;" exclaimed Bassompierre; "will you never cease to pain us by these constant allusions to your approaching death? These are things which should not be said. You will live, please God, long and happy years. What fate can be more enviable than your own? You are now in the prime of life, strong, and healthy; surrounded by honour and respect; in tranquil possession of the most flourishing kingdom upon earth; adored by your subjects; rich in money, palaces, and lands; wooed by fair women; loved by handsome favourites; with a host of noble children growing up about you. What can you require beyond this, and what more do you wish?"

"My friend," replied the King with a long-drawn sigh; "I must resign all these things."

As he uttered these words, the usher on duty threw open the door of his cabinet; and extending his hand to his two companions, which they successively raised to their lips, he disappeared.*

As the Queen was to dance a *bransle* and to appear in a ballet that evening at the Louvre, she was on the King's return closeted with the Princess de Conti,

* Bassompierre, Mém., p. 71.

the Maréchale de Fervaques,* the Countess du Fargis,† and Madame Concini, her ladies of honour, busied in the selection of the costume in which she purposed to appear. Having ascertained this fact, Henry remained alone in his apartment, until it was announced to him that the Duke de Vendôme solicited the honour of a private audience. He was instantly admitted; and after having excused himself for thus intruding upon the privacy of the monarch at a moment when, as he was well aware, the mind of the King was occupied by subjects of importance both to himself and to the state, he informed his royal father that La Brosse, a famous astrologer, had declared that the constellation under which his Majesty was born threatened him with imminent danger during that particular day; and that he consequently implored of him to be more than usually cautious until its close.

* Andrée d'Alégre, Countess and Maréchale de Fervaques, was the widow of Guy de Coligny, Count de Laval, de Montfort, &c., and the wife of Guillaume de Hautemer, Count de Graney Seigneur de Fervaques, and Marshal of France.

† Madeleine de Silli, Countess du Fargis, was the daughter of Antoine, Count de la Rochepot, and the wife of Charles d'Angennes, Seigneur du Fargis, ambassador in Spain from 1620 to 1624. She became the confidential friend and favourite of Anne of Austria, and in 1636 was intrusted with the keeping of the crown jewels. Madame du Fargis was considered to be one of the most beautiful women at the French court; but her spirit of intrigue rendered her a dangerous companion for a youthful and neglected Queen, and her morals were unfortunately not above suspicion.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the King gaily; "La Brosse is an old sharper who is anxious to obtain some of your money; and you are a young fool to believe him. My days are numbered before God."

When he had dined Henry threw himself upon his bed, but he tried in vain to sleep; he then rose and paced gloomily about the room for a considerable time, after which he once more lay down; but the result proving the same, he again sprang to his feet, and turning abruptly to the exempt of the guard, he demanded to know the time.

"It is just four o'clock, Sire;" replied the officer; "and I would venture to suggest to your Majesty to try the effect of the open air, as you appear harassed and out of spirits."

"You are right;" said the King; "cause my coach to be prepared, and I will go to the Arsenal and visit the Duke de Sully who is unwell, and takes a bath to-day."

When the carriage was announced, the King stepped into it, followed by the Dukes de Montbazon and d'Epernon, the Marshals Lavardin and Roquelaure, the Marquises de Mirabeau and la Force, and M. de Liancourt, his first equerry.

Being anxious to obtain a good view of the preparations which were making for the entry of the Queen, Henry desired that the leathern curtains, which were at that period the clumsy substitute for windows, should be looped back; and during this operation M. de Vitry

presented himself, with the intention of escorting the royal equipage with his company of the body-guard.

"No, no;" said the King impatiently; "remain in the palace, and see that everything goes on as I have ordered, and with as much speed as possible."

"At least, Sire, suffer my guards to attend you," urged de Vitry.

"I will neither take you nor your guards;" was the abrupt reply; "I want no one near me."

And upon this command the disappointed courtier was compelled to withdraw.

"Drive from the palace;" shouted the monarch in a tone of excitement; "in the direction of the Hôtel de Longueville." The carriage started at a rapid pace, and it had no sooner reached the spot indicated, than he again exclaimed: "And now to the Cross of Trahoir."*

* The Cross of Trahoir was a small irregularly shaped space, surrounded by miserable hovels, with high pointed roofs, most of which were in a state of dangerous dilapidation; the broken casements in every instance replaced by rags or straw; the doors ill-hung and swinging upon their rusty hinges, and the whole of the buildings lost in dirt and wretchedness. The inhabitants of this filthy nook were of the lowest and most depraved description, and no other tenants could indeed have been found to make their dwelling there; as in addition to the squalor of the buildings themselves, the deeply-sunk and humid soil, which in fact formed an open sewer that drained the adjacent streets, supported several permanent gibbets arranged in the form of a cross; while the thoroughfares by which it was approached were foul and fetid lanes, breathing nothing save disease and infection.

Arrived at this wretched nook, he next desired to be driven to the Cemetery of the Innocents, for which purpose it was necessary to pass from the Rue St. Honoré into that of la Feronnerie, which was at that period extremely narrow, and rendered still more so by the numerous shops built against the cemetery wall. On reaching this point the progress of the royal carriage was impeded by two heavily-laden waggons, and the footmen who had hitherto ran beside it, pressed forward towards the end of the thoroughfare in order to rejoin it at the other extremity of the street. Two attendants only remained at their station, one of whom was employed in hastening the movements of the embarrassed waggoners, while the other was engaged in arranging some portion of his dress which had become displaced. At this moment a man advanced towards the King's equipage, wrapped in a wide mantle, and carefully making his way between the trading-booths and the carriage, which he had no sooner reached than placing one of his feet on a spoke of the wheel, and the other on a door-step, he plunged a knife into the side of the King, who was at that moment engaged in reading a letter.

As he felt the blow Henry exclaimed: "I am stabbed!" As he uttered the words, he flung up his arms, an action by which the assassin profited to take a surer and more fatal aim; and before the horror-stricken companions of the unfortunate monarch could make a movement to prevent it, a second thrust pierced the lobe

of his heart. The blood gushed in torrents from his mouth, and from the wound itself, when again the remorseless knife descended, but only to become entangled in the sleeve of the Duke d'Epernon;* while with one thick and choking sob Henry IV. fell back a corpse.

No one had seen by what hand the King had fallen; and had the regicide flung away his weapon, he might have stood unquestioned among the crowd which instantly collected upon seeing the six nobles who had accompanied the sovereign spring to the ground, with loud exclamations of dismay; but Ravaillac† stood firm, with his reeking and two-edged knife still in his hand,

* Mezeray, Péréfixe, and Daniel say that it was the Duke de Montbazon whose arm warded off the blow.

† François Ravaillac was a native of Angoulême, the son of a lawyer, and was about thirty-two years of age. He was a descendant through the female line of Poltrot de Méré, the assassin of the Duke de Guise. He had been originally destined to follow the profession of his father, but the loss of a law-suit having reduced his parents to beggary, he took refuge in the monastery of the Feuillans, where he entered upon his noviciate. His weakness of intellect, and extreme irritability caused him, however, to be rejected by that community; and he returned to his native province, where he was imprisoned twelve months as an accomplice in a case of manslaughter, During his confinement he had, as he affirmed, visions connected with the conduct of the King which determined him to take his life; and for three years he had persisted in this horrible design, in furtherance of which he had thrice visited Paris. Upon the last of these occasions he had reached the capital during the Easter festivals, but he determined to delay his purpose until after the coronation of the Queen.

and avowed his crime with a boldness which in a better cause would have savoured of heroism.*

Meanwhile one of the royal party, perceiving that Henry remained perfectly motionless, while the carriage was inundated with his blood, incautiously exclaimed: "The King is dead!" upon which a loud wail arose from the assembled spectators; and the agitation of the crowd became so excessive that the Duke d'Epernon called loudly for a draught of wine, asserting that his Majesty was faint from a hurt, and required refreshment. A number of the inhabitants of the adjacent houses thereupon hastened to procure the desired beverage; while the companions of the monarch profiting by the movement, let fall the leathern curtains of the coach, and informed the populace that they must immediately convey his Majesty to the Louvre in order to secure proper assistance.† This was done with all speed, while as they passed through the city, the attendants replied to the inquiries which were made on every side that the King was merely wounded; and on arriving at the palace the body was stretched upon a bed, without having been cleansed or clothed, and in this state it remained for several hours, exposed to the gaze of all who thought proper to visit the chamber of death.‡

* Péréfixe, vol. ii, pp. 496—498. Mezeray, vol. x, p. 395. Mercure Français, p. 424. L'Etoile, vol. iv, pp. 36—40.

† Mercure Français, pp. 424, 425. L'Etoile, vol. iv, pp. 40, 41. Daniel, vol. vii, p. 507.

‡ Mezeray, vol. x, p. 397. .

During this time the Queen, fatigued by her previous exertions, was lying upon a sofa in her private cabinet, in order to recruit her strength against the evening, which was, as we have shown, to have been one of gaiety and gala, when her affrighted attendants hastened to convey to her the fatal tidings of her widowhood. In a paroxysm of uncontrollable anguish she rushed towards the door of the closet, and was about to make her way to the chamber in which the royal body had been deposited, when she was met by the chancellor, to whom the fearful news had already been communicated, and who obstructed her passage.

"Let me pass, Sir;" she faltered out; "the King is dead."

"Pardon me, Madam;" said Sillery, still impeding her purpose; "the Kings of France never die. Return, I implore of you, to your apartment. Restrain your tears until you have insured your own safety and that of your children; and instead of indulging in a grief which can avail you nothing, exert all your energies to counteract the possible effects of this disastrous and lamentable event."

M. de Vitry was immediately instructed to assemble all the royal children in the same apartment, and not to permit any one, whatever might be his rank or authority, to have access to them; an order which was implicitly obeyed; and meanwhile six-and-twenty physicians and surgeons, who had been hastily summoned to the palace, commenced opening the corpse, which was discovered

to be so universally healthy as to promise a long life. The intestines were, according to the prescribed custom, at once forwarded to St. Denis; while the Jesuits demanded the heart, in order to convey it to their church of La Flêche; and it was no sooner removed from the body, and placed in a silver basin, than it was eagerly pressed to the lips of all the nobles who assisted at the operation; each of those who carried away traces of the blood which issued from it upon his moustachios, esteeming himself highly honoured by the vestiges of the contact.*

The royal remains were then embalmed, and placed in a sumptuous coffin upon a bed of state, in one of the most spacious apartments of the Louvre, which was hung with the richest tapestry appertaining to the crown. A magnificent canopy of cloth of gold surmounted the bier; and on either side of the catafalque were placed two temporary altars; ten others having been erected in the state-gallery, at which the bishops and curates of the several metropolitan parishes daily performed six high, and one hundred low masses. Platforms covered with cloth of gold had been prepared for the cardinals and prelates; and at the foot of the royal body, cushions of black velvet were arranged for the princes of the blood and the higher nobility. A golden crucifix, and a silver vase containing holy water were deposited on a table of carved oak; and at the

* Mercure Français, pp. 440, 441.

extremity of the room were grouped enormous tapers of wax, near which stood two heralds-king-at-arms, in their splendid state costume, leaning upon their swords. The face of the corpse was exposed, the head covered by a cap of crimson velvet laced with gold, and the body attired in a vest of white satin, over which was flung a drapery of cloth of gold, having in the centre a cross elaborately embroidered in silver.*

On the day which succeeded the embalmment, while the clergy were praying in suppressed voices at the several altars, a distant sound was heard, which gradually approaching nearer and nearer to the death-chamber, became ere long blent with their murmured orisons; and as they looked towards the entrance of the apartment, they saw the young King standing upon the threshold, attended by a numerous suite of princes and nobles. Louis XIII. was wrapped in a mourning cloak of violet-coloured velvet; his vest was of dark silk; and his pale and melancholy face was half-hidden by the hood which had been drawn over his head. The high dignitaries who composed his retinue wore mantles of black velvet, and were entirely without arms. The two younger sons of France, the Dukes of Orleans and Anjou, walked on either side of the new-made sovereign, each grasping a fold of his heavy cloak; and immediately behind them came the Cardinals de Joyeuse and de Sourdis. The Prince de Condé, the Count de

* Péréfixe, vol. ii, pp. 498, 499.

Soissons, the Duke de Guise, the Prince de Joinville, and the Duke d'Elbœuf bore the royal train; and were in their turn succeeded by the prelates who assisted at the ceremony, each wearing his mitre, and carrying his crosier. In the rear followed a crowd of nobles and great officers of the household, who, however, advanced only a few yards from the doorway, while Louis and his immediate attendants slowly approached the bier. The scene was an affecting one: the boy-King, timid and trembling, surrounded by the flower of his nation's chivalry and greatness, moved with a faltering step towards the cold resting-place of that father who had so lately wielded like a toy the sceptre which he was himself still too impotent to bear, and whose bold spirit had been quenched while it was yet strong within him. On every side the vanity of human pride, which will not learn a lesson even under the stern teaching of death, was contrasted with the awe that sat upon the faces of the assistants, and with the immobility of the livid countenance which gleamed out pale and ghastly from amid its glittering drapery!

As the youthful mourner reached the death-couch, the kings-at-arms were about to present to him the aspergillum, in order that he might sprinkle the corpse with the consecrated water, when a movement among the nobles who stood near the entrance of the apartment caused them to pause; and in another moment a group of ladies, attired in deep mourning, appeared beneath the portico; where, separating into two ranks, they left

a passage open for the widowed Queen; who, clad in violet velvet like her son, with a high ruff, and her head uncovered, advanced with an unsteady step and streaming eyes towards her children.

"Pray with me, my son;" she murmured amid her sobs as she stood beneath the mortuary canopy; "there lies your happiness and mine. May it please God that our hopes may not also have expired with him who was but a few short hours ago the glory and the greatness of his kingdom! The sturdy tree has fallen, and the saplings are still weak and frail. The mission of the great Henry is accomplished, and the weight of sovereignty is transferred to your own brow. And you also, my beloved ones," she continued, glancing towards her younger sons; "come nearer to me, and let us kneel together beside the body of your august and lamented father."

The two young princes relaxed their hold of the royal mantle, and placing themselves beside their mother, the illustrious widow and her orphans sank upon their knees, and continued for a considerable time absorbed in silent and earnest prayer. At intervals a sob which could not be controlled broke upon the stillness, but at length the mourners rose; and Marie, taking the hand of the boy-King drew him towards her, and murmured in his ear a few hurried words which were inaudible to all save himself. As she ceased speaking, Louis glanced up into her face for an instant; and

then, extending his right hand towards the corpse, he said in a clear and steady voice:

"Mother, I swear to do so."

Even at that awful moment a strange light flashed from the eyes of the Queen, and a smile, which was almost one of triumph, played about her lips as she glanced at the assembled nobles; but the emotion, by whatever cause produced, was only momentary; and after having cast another long and agonised look upon the face of the dead monarch, and asperged the body with holy water, she bent her head reverentially to the King, and withdrew, followed by her ladies.

When the whole of the royal party had paid this last mark of respect to the remains of the deceased sovereign, the coffin was finally closed; and the death-room, in which the corpse was to remain for the space of eighteen days, was opened to the public from ten o'clock in the morning until six in the evening. Then, indeed, as the vast crowds succeeded each other like the ceaseless waves of an in coming sea, the bitter wail of universal lamentation rang through the halls and galleries of the palace. Henry IV. had been essentially the King of the people; and, with few and rare exceptions, it was by the people that he was truly mourned; for his sudden decease had opened so many arenas to ambition, hatred, jealousy, and hope, that the great nobles had no time to waste in tears, but were already busily engaged in the furtherance of their own fortunes.

During the exposition of the body the necessary preparations had been completed for the interment of the deceased King, which exceeded in magnificence all that had previously been attempted on a similar occasion; and this pomp was rendered even more remarkable by the privacy with which his predecessor Henry III. had been conveyed to St. Denis only a week previously; the remains of the latter sovereign having hitherto been suffered to remain in the church of St. Camille de Compiègne, whence they were removed under the guard of the Dukes of Epernon and Bellegarde, his former favourites; the etiquette in such an emergency not permitting the inhumation of the recently-deceased King in the vaults of the royal abbey until his predecessor should have occupied his appointed place.

The first stage of the funeral procession was Notre-Dame; and as the gorgeous death-train approached the church, all its avenues, save that which was kept clear by the Swiss guards, were thronged by the citizens and artisans of the capital; sounds of weeping and lamentation were to be heard on every side; yet still, divided between grief and curiosity, the crowd swept on; and as the last section of the melancholy *cortège* disappeared beneath the venerable portico of the cathedral, its vast esplanade was alive with earnest and eager human beings, who, fearful of exclusion from the interior of the building, pressed rudely against each other, overthrowing the weak, and battling with the strong, in their anxiety to

assist at the awful and solemn ceremony which was about to be enacted.

Only a few moments had consequently elapsed ere a dense mass of the people choked almost to suffocation the gothic arches and the nave of the sacred edifice, while the aisles were peopled by the more exalted individuals who had composed the funeral procession. Upwards of three thousand nobles, and a great number of ladies, all clad in mourning dresses, and attended by their pages and equerries, blended their melancholy voices with the responses of the canons of the cathedral; the bishops of the adjacent sees, and the archbishops in their rich raiment of velvet and cloth of silver, carried in their hands tapers of perfumed wax; Oriental myrrh and aloes burned in golden censers, and veiled the lofty dome with a light and diaphanous vapour which gave an unearthly aspect to the building; the organ pealed forth its deep and thrilling tones; and amid this scene of excitement, splendour, and suffering, the Archbishop of Gondy celebrated the mass, and the Bishop of Aire delivered the funeral orison. The coffin was then raised; and the crowd, hurriedly escaping from the church, once more spread itself over the neighbouring streets until the procession should again have formed; after which all this immense concourse of people accompanied the body of their beloved monarch to St. Lazare, where the clergy halted, and returned to Paris; while the nobles who were to escort the mortuary-car to

St. Denis, and who had hitherto followed it on foot, either mounted on horseback, or entered their carriages, in order to reach the Leaning Cross at the same time as the corpse.

There, the grand-prior and the monks of the royal abbey, in their mourning hoods, received the body of Henry IV. from the hands of Gondy, the Bishop of Paris; and on the following day the Cardinal-Duke de Joyeuse celebrated a solemn mass, and performed the funeral service of his late sovereign.

At the close of the lugubrious ceremony, the iron gates of the house of death swung hoarsely upon their hinges. The "De Profondis" pealed from the high altar; and Henry the Great was gathered to his ancestors.

BOOK II.

MARIE DE MEDICIS AS REGENT.

CHAPTER I.

[1610.]

SELF-POSSESSION OF MARIE DE MEDICIS — THE DUKES OF GUISE AND EPERNON ASSEMBLE THE NOBILITY—PRECAUTIONS FOR THE SECURITY OF THE METROPOLIS—THE FIRST AUDIENCE OF THE WIDOWED QUEEN —IMPOLICY OF SULLY—THE DUKE D'EPERNON ANNOUNCES TO THE PARLIAMENT THE AUTHORISED REGENCY OF MARIE—BY WHOM IT IS RATIFIED — PRECARIOUS POSITION OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—THE FIRST NIGHT OF WIDOWHOOD — INJUDICIOUS APATHY OF MARIE DE MEDICIS ON THE SUBJECT OF HER HUSBAND'S MURDER — HER INCAUTIOUS DISPLAY OF FAVOUR TOWARDS THE DUKE D'EPERNON— THE DUKE IS SUSPECTED OF HAVING BEEN AN ACCESSORY TO THE ASSASSINATION OF HENRY IV.—HE DEMANDS THE PUNISHMENT OF THE AUTHORS OF THE RUMOUR — A LAWYER AND A COURTIER — FEARLESS REPLY OF THE PRESIDENT HARLAY TO THE REBUKE OF THE REGENT — SUSPICIONS AGAINST PHILIP OF SPAIN — LOUIS XIII. HOLDS HIS FIRST BED OF JUSTICE—THE QUEEN REQUESTS THE SUPPORT OF THE PARLIAMENT—RETURN OF THE COURT TO THE LOUVRE—THE DUKE DE SULLY VISITS THE QUEEN—EFFECT OF HIS RECEPTION—THE PRINCESS-DOWAGER DE CONDÉ URGES THE RETURN OF HER SON TO COURT—M. DE SOISSONS IS INVITED BY MARIE DE MEDICIS TO THE CAPITAL—HIS DISAPPOINTMENT—HIS ARROGANCE—A COURTLY FALSEHOOD—RECEPTION OF M. DE SOISSONS AT THE GATES OF PARIS—HIS NUMEROUS RETINUE — THE RECOMPENSE OF OBEDIENCE — CONGRATULATORY DEPUTATIONS — TRIAL OF THE REGICIDE RAVAILLAC — HIS EXECUTION — ARRIVAL OF THE DUKE DE BOUILLON IN PARIS — HIS QUARREL WITH THE DUKE DE SULLY — THEY ARE RECONCILED — THE COURT ATTEND A FUNERAL SERVICE AT NOTRE-DAME — PRESUMPTION OF THE DUKE D'EPERNON — MARIE DE MEDICIS DEVOTES HERSELF TO STATE AFFAIRS—JEALOUSY OF THE PRINCES OF THE BLOOD AND GREAT NOBLES—MARIE ENDEAVOURS TO CONCILIATE THEM—THE

SPANISH MINISTER ENDEAVOURS TO PREVENT THE RETURN OF THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ — WITHOUT SUCCESS — THE REGENT FORMS A COUNCIL—PRETENSIONS OF THE NOBLES—THE DUKE D'EPERNON TAKES POSSESSION OF APARTMENTS IN THE LOUVRE—HE LEAGUES WITH THE COUNT DE SOISSONS AGAINST THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ—SPECULATIONS OF THE MINISTERS — THEIR POLICY — BOYHOOD OF LOUIS XIII.— A DELICATE POSITION — A ROYAL REBUKE — COURT FAVOUR — THE VISIONARY GOVERNMENT—DISCONTENT OF THE CITIZENS OF PARIS— UNPOPULARITY OF THE REGENT—THE EX-QUEEN'S ENTERTAINMENT— IMPRUDENCE OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—CONFIRMATION OF THE EDICT OF NANTES—RETURN OF THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ—THE REGENT IS ALARMED BY HIS POPULARITY—DOUBLE-DEALING OF THE DUKE D'EPERNON— THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ DECLARES HIS INTENTION TO UPHOLD THE INTERESTS OF THE REGENT — HIS RECEPTION AT THE LOUVRE — HE REJOINS HIS WIFE—THE COURT OF THE HÔTEL DE CONDÉ—A CABAL —MARIE IS ADVISED TO ARREST THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ—SHE REFUSES — THE SECRET COUNCIL — INDIGNATION OF SULLY — MISCHIEVOUS ADVICE OF THE DUKE DE BOUILLON — MUNIFICENCE OF THE REGENT TO M. DE CONDÉ—THE ROYAL TREASURY—VENALITY OF THE FRENCH PRINCES — THE ENGLISH AMBASSADOR — ROYAL PLEDGES — PHILIP OF SPAIN PROPOSES A DOUBLE ALLIANCE WITH FRANCE — THE REGENT WELCOMES THE OFFER — POLICY OF PHILIP — THE SECRET PLEDGE— MADAME DE VERNEUIL URGES HER CLAIM TO THE HAND OF THE DUKE DE GUISE — THE IMPORTANT DOCUMENT — A DUCAL DILEMMA — THE REGENT DISCOUNTENANCES THE CLAIM OF THE MARQUISE—MADAME DE VERNEUIL IS INDUCED BY JEANNIN TO WITHDRAW HER PRETENSIONS —HER SUBSEQUENT OBSCURITY.

CHAPTER I.

[1610.]

THE news of the King's decease had no sooner been communicated to Marie de Medicis than, profiting by the advice of the chancellor, she made a violent attempt at composure, and although still with streaming eyes and ill-suppressed sobs, she gave her assent to the suggestions of her councillors. The Dukes de Guise and d'Epernon were instructed to mount upon the instant, and to assemble as many of the nobles as were within reach, whom they were to accompany through the streets of the city, declaring upon their way that the King was not dead although grievously wounded; the city gates were ordered to be closed; the keys delivered to the lieutenant of police; and strict commands issued to prevent all gatherings of the populace in the thoroughfares; while the guards who were distributed through the faubourgs were hastily consolidated in the environs of the Parliament, in

order, should such a measure become necessary, to enforce the recognition of the Queen as Regent of the kingdom.

These arrangements made, MM. de Guise, d'Epernon, de Villeroy, and de Lavardin, demanded an audience of the august widow, at which, kneeling before her, they kissed her hand, and assured her of their unalterable devotion. Their example was imitated by all the great nobles of the court, with the sole exception of the Duke de Sully, who was encountered by Bassompierre in the Rue St. Antoine, accompanied by about forty mounted followers, and evidently in a state of intense agitation. "Gentlemen;" he exclaimed, as the two parties met; "if the loyalty which you each vowed to the monarch whom we have just been unhappy enough to lose, is as deeply impressed upon your hearts as it should be upon those of all faithful Frenchmen, swear at this precise moment to preserve the same fidelity towards the King his son and successor, and that you will employ your blood and your life to avenge him."

"Sir," haughtily replied Bassompierre, who had probably more deeply mourned the death of his royal master and friend than any other individual of the court, and who was consequently revolted by the imperious tone of this address; "it is we who have been enjoined to enforce this oath upon others, and we do not need any exhortations to do our duty."

Sully regarded the speaker gloomily for an instant;

and then, as though overcome by some sudden apprehension, he coldly saluted the group of nobles, and retraced his way to the Bastille, where he forthwith closed the gates; having previously, on his way thither, caused his attendants to carry off all the bread which they could collect either in the shops or markets. He, moreover, no sooner thus found himself in safety than he dispatched a courier to his son-in-law the Duke de Rohan, who was with the army in Champagne at the head of six thousand Switzers, desiring him to march straight upon Paris: an indiscretion which he was subsequently destined to expiate, from the heavy suspicion which it necessarily entailed upon him. Vainly did MM. de Praslin and de Créquy, who were sent to summon him to the presence of the young King, endeavour to induce him to lose no time in presenting himself at the Louvre; the only concession which he could be prevailed upon to make, was to desire the duchess, his wife,* to hasten to the palace, and to offer to the Regent and her son his

* Madame de Sully, the second wife of the duke, was Rachel de Gochefilet, the daughter of Jacques, Seigneur de Vaucelas, and of Marie d'Arbalête. She was first married to François Hurault, Sieur de Châteaupers and de Marais, who died in 1590. She survived the Duke de Sully, and died in 1659, at the age of ninety-three years. The arrogance of this lady was so notorious that it became the subject of one of those biting epigrams for which Henry IV. had rendered himself famous; for it is on record that upon an occasion when he was a guest at the table of the

sincere condolence upon their irreparable misfortune.*

The Duke d'Epernon, after having stationed the guards at the palace, was instructed by the Queen to proceed at once to the Parliament, which was then assembled, and to inform its members that her Majesty had in her possession a decree signed and sealed by the late King, conferring upon herself the regency of the kingdom during the minority of her son; entreating them at once to ratify the appointment, in order to ensure the public tranquillity. She also privately dispatched a messenger to the President de Harlay, whom she knew to be attached to her interests, and to be at once able and zealous, to instruct him to assemble the court without delay, and to use all his influence to enforce her rights. De Harlay, who on receipt of her message was confined to his bed by gout, immediately caused himself to be dressed, and proceeded in a chair to the Augustine monastery; where he had scarcely arrived when the Duke d'Eper-

finance-minister, he drank her health, accompanied by the following impromptu :

" Je bois à *toi,* Sully;
Mais j'ai failli;
Je devois dire à *vous,* adorable duchesse,
Pour boire à vos appas
Faut mettre chapeau bas."
—*Dictionnaire des Hommes Illustres.*

* Bassompierre, Mém., p. 72.

non entered the hall, and declared the will of the late King, and the confidence felt by the Queen that the Parliament would, without repugnance, recognise her right to the dignity thus conferred upon her.* This they immediately did; and owing to the absence of the Prince de Condé, and the Count de Soissons, both of whom aspired to the high office about to be filled by Marie de Medicis, without the slightest opposition or disturbance.

This happy intelligence was conveyed to the Queen by M. d'Epernon, who returned to the palace accompanied by one of the members of the Parliament; when the latter, after having been presented to his royal mistress, on whose right hand sat the young King bewildered by what was passing about him, bent his knee before their Majesties, and tendered to Marie a scroll, which having been returned by her to the accredited envoy of the supreme court, was read aloud, as follows:

"The attorney-general, having represented to the Parliament in full assembly that the King having just expired by the act of a most cruel, most inhuman, and most detestable regicide committed upon his sacred person, it became necessary to provide for the safety of the reigning monarch and of his kingdom, required that an order should be promptly issued concerning his safety and that of the state, which could only be ruled and governed by the Queen during the minority

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, p. 55.

of the said lord her son; and that it should please the said court to proclaim her Regent, in order that it might, through her, administer to the affairs of the realm; and that the subject having been duly considered, the said court had declared, and still declares the said Queen, the King's mother, Regent of France, to be intrusted with the administration of all matters of state during the minority of the said lord her son, with all power and authority.

"Done in Parliament, this 14th of May, 1610.

(Signed) "DU TILLET."*

During the course of the day guards had been sent to the residence of the several foreign ambassadors, in order to protect them from the violence of the populace; and especially to that of the Spanish minister, who was peculiarly obnoxious to the Parisians. The governors of provinces and fortresses who chanced to be at that moment sojourning in the capital, were ordered to repair without delay to their several commands, to maintain tranquillity within their separate jurisdictions; and, save the audible lamentations which throughout the night broke the silence of the mourning city, all was calm and quiet; except in the immediate neighbourhood of the Augustine monastery, where the attorney-general had authorised the workmen to

* Extracted from the Parliamentary Registers in the Memoirs of Phelipeaux de Pontchatrain, secretary of the Orders of Marie de Medicis.

prepare the great hall for the reception of the young King, and where the necessary preparations for his presence on the following day were continued until dawn.*

The parliamentary envoy having quitted the palace, and the crowd of nobles by whom its spacious saloons and galleries had been filled, having retired, Marie was at length left at liberty to indulge her grief, rendered only the more poignant from the constraint to which she had been so long subjected. Her first impulse was to command that the bed of the young sovereign should be removed to her own chamber; and this done, she abandoned herself to all the bitterness of her grief.

She had, indeed, legitimate cause for tears. With a son still almost a child, ambitious nobles jealous of her power, and a great nation looking towards herself for support and consolation, she might well shrink as she contemplated the arduous task which had so suddenly devolved upon her. Moreover, death is the moral crucible which cleanses from all dross the memories of those who are submitted to its unerring test; and in such an hour she could not but forget the faults of the husband in dwelling upon the greatness of the monarch. Who, then, shall venture to follow her through the reveries of that fatal night? Who shall dare, unrebuked, to assert that the ambition of the woman

* L'Etoile, vol. iv, p. 49.

quenched the affection of the wife? Or, that Marie, in the excess of her self-gratulation, forgot the price at which her delegated greatness had been purchased. That some have been found bold enough to do this says little for their innate knowledge of human nature. The presence of death and the stillness of night are fearful chasteners of worldly pride; and with these the daughter of the Medici was called upon to contend. Her position demanded mercy at the hands of her historians, and should not have sought it in vain.

From one reproach it is, however, impossible to exonerate her, and that one was the repugnance which she evinced to encourage any investigation into the real influence under which Ravaillac had committed the murder of the King. In vain did she receive communications involving individuals who were openly named; she discouraged every report; and although among these the Duke d'Epernon made a conspicuous figure, she treated the accusation with indifference, and continued to display towards him an amount of confidence and favour to which he had never previously attained.

Indignant at this extraordinary supineness, the President Harlay only increased his own efforts to unravel so painful a mystery; and refusing all credence to the assertion of the regicide that he had been self-prompted —an assertion to which he had perseveringly adhered amid torture, and even unto death, with a firmness truly marvellous under the circumstances—the zealous magistrate carefully examined every document

that was laid before him, and interrogated their authors with a pertinacity which created great alarm among the accused parties, of whom none were so prominent as Madame de Verneuil and the Duke d'Epernon.

The latter, indeed, considered it expedient to wait upon the commissioners appointed by the Parliament to investigate these reports, in order to urge the condemnation of their authors; these being, as he asserted, not only guilty of defaming innocent persons, but also of exciting a dangerous feeling among the people, at all times too anxious to seek the disgrace and ruin of their superiors. He found, however, little sympathy among those whom he sought to conciliate; and on addressing himself to the president, whom he entreated to inform him of the details of the accusation made against himself, that magistrate, without any effort to disguise his feeling of repulsion towards the applicant, coldly replied: "I am, Sir, not your reporter, but your judge."

"I ask this of you as my friend," was the retort of the duke.

"I have no friend;" said the uncompromising minister. "I shall do you justice, and with that you must content yourself."

So uncourteous a reception excited the indignation of M. d'Epernon, who forthwith hastened to the Louvre to complain to the Regent of the insult to which he had been subjected; and Marie had no sooner been apprised of the affair, than, with a want of caution highly

detrimental to her own reputation, she dispatched a nobleman of her household to M. de Harlay, to inform him that she had just learnt with extreme regret that he had failed in respect to the duke; and that she must request that in future he would exhibit more deference towards a person of his quality and merit. This somewhat abrupt injunction, addressed to the first magistrate of the kingdom, and under circumstances so peculiar, only tended, however, to arouse M. de Harlay to an assumption of the dignity attached to his office, and he replied with haughty severity to the individual who had been charged with the royal message:

"During fifty years I have been a judge, and for the last thirty I have had the honour to be the head of the sovereign Court of Peers of this kingdom; and I never before have seen either duke, lord, or peer, or any other man whatever might be his quality, accused of the crime of *lèse-majesté*, as M. d'Epernon now is, who came into the presence of his judges booted and spurred, and wearing his sword at his side. Do not fail to tell the Queen this."*

So marked an exhibition of the opinion entertained by the Parliament on the subject of the complicity of the duke in the crime then under investigation, did not fail to produce a powerful effect upon all to whom it became known; but it nevertheless failed to shake the

* Mém. pour l'Hist. de France. vol. ii, p. 359.

confidence of Marie de Medicis in the innocence of a courtier who had, in the short space of a few days, by his energy and devotion, rendered himself essential to her; while thus much must be admitted in extenuation of her conduct, reprehensible as it appeared; that every rumour relative to the death of her royal consort immediately reached her, and that two of these especially appeared more feasible than the guilt of a noble, who could, apparently, reap no benefit from the commission of so foul and dangerous a crime. In the first place, the Spanish cabinet had been long labouring to undermine the power of France, in which they had failed through the energy and wisdom of the late King, whose opposition to the alliance which they had proposed between the Dauphin and their own Infanta, had, moreover, wounded their pride, and disappointed their projects; and there were not wanting many who accused the agents of Philip of having instigated the assassination; while another rumour, less generally disseminated, ascribed the act of Ravaillac to the impulse of personal revenge, elicited by the circumstance that Henry had first dishonoured, and subsequently abandoned, a sister to whom he was devotedly attached.

That M. d'Epernon was politic enough to impress upon the mind of the Queen the extreme probability of either or both of these facts, there can be little doubt; as it would appear from the testimony of several witnesses, that the intention of the murderer was known for some time before the act was com-

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mitted; and nothing could be more rational than the belief, that if the agents of Spain were indeed seeking to secure a trusty tool for the execution of so dark a deed, they would rather intrust it to one who could by the same means satiate his own thirst of private revenge, than to a mere bravo who perilled life and salvation simply from the greed of gain.

Day by day, moreover, the ministers were overwhelmed by accusations which pointed at different individuals. Those who had opposed the return of the Jesuits to France, openly declared that they were the actual assassins; while even in the provinces several persons were arrested who had predicted before its occurrence the death of the King, and the means by which it was to be accomplished; and finally the affair became so involved that, with the exception of the woman Coman to whom allusion has been elsewhere made, and who was condemned to imprisonment for life, all the suspected persons were finally acquitted.*

At eight o'clock on the morning succeeding the assassination of the King all the members of the different chambers assembled in their scarlet robes and capes; the presidents wearing their cloaks and mortar-shaped caps; and half an hour afterwards the chancellor, accompanied by several masters of the Court of Requests, and dressed from head to foot in black velvet, took his place below the first president in the

* Mercure Français, 1611, p. 17.

great hall of the Augustine monastery, where the young King was to hold his Bed of Justice; the ordinary place of meeting being still encumbered with the costly preparations which had been made for the state-reception of the Queen. This ceremonial was essential to the legal tenure of the regency by his mother, which required the ratification of the sovereign; and his assent in the presence of his princes, dukes, peers, and officers of the crown, to her assumption of entire and complete control over his own education, and the administration of the government during his minority; as well as his approval of the decree delivered on the previous day by the Parliament.*

Then arrived in rapid succession the Duke de Mayenne, the Connétable de Montmorency, the cardinals, prelates, and other great dignitaries; who were finally succeeded by the King himself, habited in a suit of violet velvet, and surrounded and followed by a numerous retinue of princes, dukes, nobles, and high officers of the court. Louis himself was mounted on a white palfrey, but all the members of his suite, whatever their rank, were on foot. The Queen came next in her coach, attended by the princesses of the blood, and the other great ladies of her household; not as she had anticipated only two days previously, blazing with jewels and clad in royal robes, but covered with an ample and mourning drapery of black crape.

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, p. 56.

The necessary ceremonies having been observed, the King at length took his place upon the Bed of Justice, having the Queen upon his right hand; while beneath their Majesties were seated the Prince de Conti, the Count d'Enguien who represented his father, M. de Soissons, the Duke de Guise, the Duke de Montmorency, the Duke d'Epernon, the Duke de Sully, all peers of France, and the Marshals de Brissac,* de Lavardin, and de Bois-Dauphin;† while the other dignitaries of the state and church were arranged upon either hand of the young monarch, and the body of the hall was occupied by the members of the several courts.

When all had taken their places, and silence was restored, the Queen rising from her seat, and throwing back her veil, proceeded to address the assembly, but for a time her voice was inaudible, and choked with sobs. At length, however, she mastered her emotion; and with a gesture full of mournful dignity, she besought all present to continue to her son and to herself the same loyalty and devotion which they had exhibited

* Charles de Cossé, Count de Brissac, Governor of Paris, in the year 1594 delivered up that city to Henry IV., by whom he was on that occasion raised to the dignity of Marshal of France. In 1626, Louis XIII. erected his estate into a duchy-peerage, and in the following year he died Duke de Brissac.

† Urbain de Laval, Marquis de Bois-Dauphin, was one of the four marshals of France created by the Duke de Mayenne, whose rank was subsequently confirmed by Henry IV. He was one of the original chiefs of the League.

towards the monarch of whom the state had been so cruelly bereft; assuring them that it should be her study to induce the King to be guided by their counsels in all things; and imploring of them to afford him such advice as should on all occasions be compatible with his own dignity, and the welfare of the country over which he was called upon to rule.

Short as was this harangue, it was not without considerable difficulty that she accomplished its utterance. More than once, suffocated by her grief, she was compelled to pause until she could regain her voice; and when at its close she drew her veil once more over her head, and prepared to leave the hall, the assembly rose simultaneously, and implored of her to honour the meeting by her presence until it should be dissolved. Exhausted and wretched, Marie strove to utter her thanks, and to retire; but the opposition offered to this resolution was so great and so unanimous that she was at length prevailed upon to resume her seat; and she had no sooner done so than Louis, raising for a moment the cap from his head, in his turn addressed the court.

The reply of the chancellor was pregnant with wisdom and loyalty; in it he assured the King of the fidelity and devotion of all ranks of his subjects, and confirmed the Queen in her regency; after which the attorney-general having spoken at great length to the same effect, the royal and august personages rose and returned to the Louvre in the same order as they had observed on their arrival, followed throughout the whole distance by the

acclamations of the citizens, and reiterated cries of "Vive le Roi!"*

An hour or two subsequently Marie de Medicis accorded an audience to the Duke de Sully, who had, with considerable difficulty, been induced by M. de Guise to present himself at the palace, to offer his condolences to the young sovereign and his august mother;† and he was accordingly introduced into the private apartment of the Queen, where he found her surrounded by the ladies of her household, and absorbed in grief. As he was announced she burst into a passion of tears, and for a time was unable to welcome him; but having at length succeeded in controlling her emotion, she desired that the King should be brought to her; and he had no sooner appeared than she pointed out to him the Duke de Sully, when the young monarch threw himself into his arms, and loaded him with the most affectionate caresses.

"You do well, my son;" sobbed Marie, as she remarked the emotion of the boy; "you must love M. de Sully, who was one of the best and most faithful servants of the King your father, and who will, I trust, continue to serve you with the same zeal."‡

The interview was a lengthy one; and the urbanity of the Queen produced so powerful an effect upon the mind of the finance-minister that he ceased to appre-

* Matthieu, Hist des Derniers Troubles, 1610, pp. 446—453.

† Bassompierre, Mém., p. 72.

‡ Sully, Mém., vol. viii, p. 30.

hend any diminution of his influence, and accordingly sent to countermand the return of the Duke de Rohan, who had already advanced a day's march towards the capital.*

Meanwhile the dowager-Princess de Condé had hastened to inform her son of the assassination of the King, and to urge his instant return to the capital; a summons to which he replied by forwarding letters of condolence both to the King and the Regent, containing the most earnest assurances of his loyalty and devotion alike to their personal interests and to those of the nation; and declaring that he only waited their commands to return to court, in order to serve them in any manner which they might see fit to suggest.

The Count de Soissons who had only left Paris a few days before the coronation of the Queen, for the reason elsewhere stated, and who had retired to his estate near Chartres, was invited by a messenger dispatched by Marie, to return without delay to the capital, where the interests of the state required his presence. This command he prepared to obey with alacrity; but his zeal was greatly damped when, on arriving at St. Cloud, he ascertained that the Queen had been already recognised by the Parliament as Regent of the kingdom, and that her dignity had been publicly confirmed by the young sovereign. On first receiving this intelligence, his rage was without bounds; he even questioned the

* Bassompierre, Mém., p. 72.

legality of an arrangement of this description made without his sanction, he being, during the absence of the Prince de Condé, the first subject in France after the Queen herself; and then, moderating the violence of his expressions, he complained that by the precipitation of the Parliament, he had been deprived of the privilege of signifying his assent to the nomination, as he had previously pledged himself to do. He next questioned the right of the Parliament to interfere in so important a measure; declaring that their fiat was null and void, as the Chambers had no authority to organise a government, and still less to appoint a regency, which could only be effectively done by a royal testament, a declaration made before death, or by an assembly of the States-General. He, moreover, insisted that the case was without precedent; that the power of the Parliament was restricted to the administration of justice; and that while it was desirable that the mothers of princes, heirs to the throne, should be intrusted with the care of their education, the government of the country belonged by right to the princes of the blood to the exclusion of all other claimants.*

Every effort was made to calm his anger; and it is probable that the representations of his personal friends convinced him of the impolicy of further opposition; although he so long delayed his arrival in the capital that he could only explain his tardiness by declaring that

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 57—59.

the sudden intelligence of the King's murder had so seriously affected his health that he was unable to obey the summons of the Queen until the 16th of May, when he was met at the gate of the city by the Duke d'Epernon at the head of a large body of the nobility.

The pomp in which he reached Paris, however, sufficed to prove that he was totally unprepared for the existing posture of affairs; and that he had taken every precaution to enforce his claims, should he find the public mind disposed to admit them. His retinue consisted of three hundred horse, and he travelled with all the pretensions of royalty. A few words, nevertheless, sufficed to dispel the illusion under which he laboured; and once convinced that the supreme authority of the Queen had been both recognised and ratified, he had no other alternative save to offer his submission; which he did, moreover, with so good a grace that Marie bestoved upon him, in token of welcome, the government of Normandy which had hitherto been held by the Dauphin; while a short time subsequently, when he manifested fresh symptoms of discontent, the Duke de Bouillon was instructed to inquire by what means he could be conciliated; upon which he demanded a pension of fifty thousand livres, the reversion of the government of Dauphiny for his son, who had not at that time attained his fifth year, and the sum of two hundred thousand crowns with which to pay a debt to the Duke of Savoy, contracted on the duchy of Moncalier belonging to his wife. These exorbitant claims

were at once admitted, and M. de Soissons forthwith declared himself the firm ally of the Queen.*

All the cities and provinces of the kingdom hastened to dispatch deputations to the capital, to present their assurances of respectful homage to the young sovereign, and to recognise the regency of his mother; and these were shortly afterwards succeeded by the plenipotentiaries and envoys of the different European states, whose condolences and congratulations were graciously acknowledged by Marie and her ministers in the name of the new monarch.

On the 18th of the month the regicide Ravaillac was put upon his trial, during which he exhibited a stoical indifference that filled his judges with astonishment. Far from seeking to evade the penalty of his crime, he admitted it with a calmness and composure perfectly unshaken; and on the 27th his sentence was pronounced and executed with such barbarity that we shall avoid the detail.

On the following day the Duke de Bouillon arrived in Paris, and proceeded directly to the palace to kiss the hand of the Queen-Regent, and take the oath of fidelity to the King, by both of whom he was warmly welcomed; Marie being anxious to rally about her all the high nobility, especially such as had formerly exhibited symptoms of discontent. M. de Bouillon had not, however, been long in the capital, when a quarrel arose

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 83, 84.

between himself and the Duke de Sully, whom he accused of arrogance and presumption, reminding him that he had not always been in the exalted position which he then occupied, while as regarded himself he was born to higher fortunes than he had yet attained. The anger of both parties was so much excited during the interview, that great apprehensions were entertained of the result of so serious a misunderstanding; nor was it until the Duke de Guise had exerted all his influence with both parties that a partial reconciliation took place, which was subsequently completed through the good sense of the two nobles themselves, who in their cooler moments reflected upon the injury which must accrue alike to the national interests, and to those of the reformed religion, of which they both were members, should they permit their private feelings to interfere with their public duties.

On the second day after the interment of the King, the Regent proceeded in state to Notre-Dame, in order to assist at a solemn service which she had caused to be celebrated for the repose of his soul. The *cortège* consisted of seven coaches, containing herself, the princesses of the blood, the duchesses, and other great ladies of her household, under a strong escort of guards and harquebusiers, commanded by M. de la Châtaigneraie. All the principal nobility, with the exception of the Count de Soissons, attended by their several retainers, were already mounted when she descended to the court of the palace, and were awaiting her without

the gates, when considerable excitement was created by the Duke d'Epernon, who, detaching himself from his followers, rode to the side of her carriage. As no prince of the blood had ever assumed this privilege, not even the Guises, lofty as were their pretensions, a general murmur arose among the assembled nobles; but M. d'Epernon, regardless of this demonstration of displeasure, and aware that he had already obtained considerable influence over the mind of the Queen, retained his position, to the extreme indignation of the other princes.*

The Regent and her retinue first proceeded to the bishop's palace, whence the procession was formed to the church. At its head walked the princes of the blood then present at the court, and the principal nobles, with the exception of the Prince de Conti and the Count de Soissons, who supported the Queen, whom they upheld by each placing a hand beneath her arms. The dowager-Princess de Condé, the Princess de Conti, and the Countess de Soissons, bore her mourning train, which was seven aunes in length; and after them came Madame and the ex-Queen Marguerite, both habited in the deepest black; who were in their turn followed by all the great ladies of the court and household.† At the conclusion of the service, the Regent returned to the Louvre; and in the afternoon, attended as she had been on the previous occasion, she proceeded to perform

* L'Etoile, vol. iv, p. 155.

† Mercure Français, 1610, vol. i, p. 492.

her devotions in the church of St. Victor, amid the respectful salutations of the assembled populace.

The grief of the citizens still continued unabated, but it was apparent that a struggle for pre-eminence had already commenced among the higher class. The Regent, whose affliction was as brief as it had been violent, seemed suddenly endowed with a new nature. Her ambition grew with her responsibility, and instead of participating in political questions as she had previously done with undisguised reluctance, she entered eagerly into public affairs, and sought earnestly to establish her authority; an attempt in which she was seconded by the principal ministers of state, who at once felt that by supporting her power they were consolidating their own.

M. de Condé, the first prince of the blood, was still in Italy; his brother the Prince de Conti, being totally deaf and partially dumb, was incapable of government; the Count de Soissons was at variance with both; and the Duke de Nevers was commanding the army in Champagne, until he should be superseded by the arrival of the King in person, according to the arrangement made by that unhappy monarch before the departure of the troops from France; while the Prince de Joinville, who, it may be remembered had been banished from the court for his intrigue with Madame de Verneuil, and who had been travelling in England and Germany, and afterwards retired to Lorraine until his brother the Duke de Guise should be enabled to procure his recal, was also absent.

To each and all of these princes, Marie, who at once felt the necessity of their immediate presence in order to give dignity and stability to her position, hastened to forward messengers to invite their instant return; a summons which was promptly obeyed by the Duke de Nevers and all the principal officers under his command, as well as by M. de Joinville, who also received a pressing letter from the Duke de Guise, enjoining him to profit without delay by so admirable an opportunity of regaining his forfeited favour. But whatever were the haste with which all endeavoured to reach the court, it still required time for them to do so;* and meanwhile the other great nobles were anxious to shake off the control to which they had been subjected during the previous reign. Individual hatred came to the assistance of personal ambition, and those whose talent enabled them to acquire influence at court began to exercise it no less zealously in the ruin of others than in their own aggrandisement.†

The Prince de Condé had no sooner forwarded to the Queen the letter to which allusion has been already made, than he received a pressing invitation to return to France, for which purpose he prepared to leave Milan; a step so obnoxious to Spain that the Count de Fuentes spared no pains in dissuading him from its adoption. He represented in earnest terms the exceptional position of the Prince, whose rank, as the

* Matthieu, Hist. des Troubles, Book. III, p. 454.

† Mém. de Henry, Duke de Rohan, édit. Petitot.

first subject of the realm, justified him in aspiring to a throne filled by a mere boy, who could be considered only as a puppet in the hands of an ambitious woman; following up his arguments by an offer of efficient aid from his own monarch to enable M. de Condé to enforce his pretensions; and while he was thus endeavouring to shake the loyalty of his guest, the Spanish ambassador at the court of Rome was engaged with equal zeal in seeking to impress the necessity of the same policy upon Paul V. Both were, however, destined to fail in their efforts, the Sovereign-Pontiff declining to interfere in so extreme a case, and the Prince resolutely refusing to adopt the course thus treacherously suggested.

At Brussels, the persecution was renewed by the Spanish minister, seconded by the Papal Nuncio, Cardinal Bentivoglio,* whose zeal for the interests of Spain caused him to overlook the wishes of the Pope. All, however, proved unavailing; and the Prince, after a brief sojourn in the Belgian capital, finally departed for Paris; whither his wife had previously repaired, accom-

* The Cardinal Guy Bentivoglio, born in 1579, was descended from an illustrious Bolognese family, who had formerly been the sovereigns of that state, and had produced alike great warriors, renowned poets, and celebrated prelates. He was himself a distinguished diplomatist and an able writer. Literature is indebted to his pen for the "History of the Civil Wars of Flanders," sundry "Memoirs," and a "Narrative of Flanders." He died in 1644.

panied by her step-sister the Countess d'Auvergne, and where she had been warmly and honourably welcomed by the Queen.*

Meanwhile, it having been considered advisable that the King should make a declaration on the Edicts of Pacification, it became previously necessary to form a council, under whose advice the Queen-Regent might proceed to act. When preparing to quit France, Henry IV. had drawn up a list of fifteen persons whom he had selected for this purpose, and had decided that every question should be determined by a majority of voices, the Queen herself commanding only one vote: the death of the King had, however, unfortunately tended to render the execution of his purpose impossible, all the princes and great officers of the crown asserting their right to admission, and resolutely maintaining their claim.

The Count de Soissons urged his privilege of birth, and haughtily declined to advance any other plea; while the Connétable de Montmorency loudly declared that no council could legally be formed from which he was excluded; and the Cardinal de Joyeuse maintained the same argument. As regarded the Guises, who affected at this juncture a perfect equality with the house of Bourbon, their eagerness to hold office defeated its own object; the Duke de Mayenne and the Duke de Guise equally declaring their right to assist in the

* Mém. de la Régence de Marie de Medicis, pp. 5—14 D'Estrées, Mém., édition Michaud, pp. 375, 376.

government of the kingdom; while it was considered as incompatible with the interests of the crown that two members of the same family should be admitted into so important an assembly. The Duke de Nevers, who disputed precedency with the Guises, also came forward as a candidate; while the Dukes of Bouillon and Epernon, who were at open feud, and each ambitious of power, heightened the difficulty by arrogantly asserting their personal claims. To receive both was impossible, as from their known enmity nothing but opposition could be anticipated; and thus, upon the threshold of her power, Marie de Medicis found herself trammelled by the very individuals from whom she had hoped for assistance and support.

To select between the two last-mentioned nobles was difficult as well as dangerous; the position of M. d'Epernon as colonel-general of the infantry, and his immense possessions, rendering him a formidable adversary; while the Duke de Bouillon was still more powerful from his occupation of Sedan, his intelligence with foreign states, and his influence over his co-religionists. Moreover, Marie was no longer in a position to oppose the pretensions of the Duke d'Epernon, even had she felt it expedient to do so; the unlimited confidence which she had reposed in him since the death of her royal consort having invested him with a factitious importance, by which he was enabled to secure a strong party in his favour upon every question in which he was personally interested. She had assigned

to his use a suite of apartments in the Louvre, declaring that his continual presence and advice were essential to her; and, in addition to this signal favour, she communicated to him the contents of all the despatches which she received, and followed his advice upon all matters of state as implicitly as though she considered it to be unanswerable.

His credit at court was also greatly increased by the Count de Soissons, who, having ascertained the extent of his favour with the Regent, spared no pains to secure his friendship before the arrival of the Prince de Condé, believing that the support of one who was all-powerful for the moment, might be of essential service in counteracting the ambitious views of so formidable a rival; and, moreover, advantageous in assisting him to accomplish the marriage of his son Louis de Bourbon with Mademoiselle de Montpensier, an alliance which was the great object of his ambition.*

Thus the Duke d'Epernon was not only powerful in himself, but found his pretensions recognised and sanctioned by a prince of the blood; an advantage of which he was not slow to appreciate the value; and he consequently listened to the expostulations which were addressed to him by those who dreaded the effects of his interference in state affairs with a quiet indifference that satisfied them of their utter inutility.

But while the Queen was bewildered by these con-

* Hist. de la Vie du Duc d'Epernon, pp. 248, 249.

flicting claims, her ministers, who were anxious to retain the power in their own hands, were not displeased to see the number of candidates for place daily increase. They were aware that on the arrival of the Prince de Condé he must necessarily take his seat in the council, while it would be equally impossible to exclude the Count de Soissons, the Duke de Montmorency, or the Cardinal de Joyeuse; and they felt that nothing could more effectually limit the power of these great dignitaries than the admission of so large a number as must tend to diminish their influence over the Queen, and to create a confusion in the management of public affairs which would necessarily render her more dependent upon their own wisdom and experience. Under this impression they consequently impressed upon her the absolute necessity of satisfying every claimant; and a council was accordingly formed which was more noisy than efficient; and where, although each was free to deliver his opinion, the ministers were careful, in their secret interviews with the Queen, during which they exposed their own views and sentiments, to carry out their preconceived measures.*

The struggle which the late King had foretold between the Regent and her son had, meanwhile, already commenced. The character of Louis XIII. was, from his earliest boyhood, at once saturnine and obstinate; and thus, aware of the importance which the Queen attached

* Mém. de la Régence, pp. 6—8. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 7, 8. D'Estrées, Mém., p. 376.

to the exercises of religion, he commenced his predetermined opposition to her will by refusing to observe them. Remonstrances and arguments were alike unavailing; the boy-King refused to listen to either; and Marie ultimately commanded that he should undergo the chastisement of the rod. The order was given, but no one volunteered obedience; the vengeance of the man might hereafter compensate for the mortification of the child; and the son of Marie de Medicis, stolid and gloomy though he was, had already imbibed a full sense of the respect due to his sovereign rank.

"How now, M. de Souvré!"* exclaimed the Queen; "is the frown of a wayward boy more dangerous than the displeasure of a mother? I insist that the King shall undergo the chastisement which he has so richly merited."

Thus urged, the unwilling governor was compelled not only to lay his hands upon the sacred person of royalty, but also to prepare to execute the peremptory command of his irritated mistress; and the young Louis no sooner perceived the impossibility of escape than he coldly submitted to the infliction, merely saying: "I suppose it must be so, M. de Souvré, since it is the will of the Queen; but be careful not to strike too hard."

An hour or two afterwards, when he paid his usual

* M. de Souvré was the governor of Louis XIII.

visit to the Regent, her Majesty rose on his entrance according to the established etiquette, and made him a profound curtsey. "I should prefer, Madam;" said the young Prince; "fewer curtseys and fewer floggings."*

At the commencement of June intelligence reached the court of the death of the Archbishop of Rouen, the natural brother of the late King, and it was no sooner authenticated than the Regent hastened to bestow his Abbey of St. Florent upon M. de Souvré, and that of Marmoutier, one of the most wealthy and beautiful in France, upon the brother of her favourite Leonora;† an unhappy being who was not only deformed in person, but so wholly deficient in intellect that every effort even to teach him to read had proved ineffectual. So abject was he, indeed, that Concini had been careful never to allow him to come into contact with Henry IV. lest he should be banished from the court; and this ill-advised donation consequently excited great disapprobation, and elicted fresh murmurs against the Italian followers of the Queen.

* L'Etoile, vol. iv, pp. 97, 98.

† Etienne Galigaï, known from his extreme ugliness as "the baboon of the court." When he went to take possession of his abbey, the monks refused to receive him as their abbot, alleging that they had been accustomed to be governed by princes, and not by carpenters, like himself, who had been seen to handle the plane and saw. Etienne Galigaï withdrew into Italy after the execution of his relatives.

These were, moreover, augmented by another circumstance which immediately supervened. A report was spread of the decease of M. de Boëce, the Governor of Bourg in Brescia, a brave and faithful soldier, who had rendered good service to his country; and the Queen, urged by her favourite, was imprudent enough, without awaiting proper confirmation of the rumour, to confer the government upon Concini, whose arrogance, fostered as it was by the indulgence of his royal mistress, was already becoming intolerable to the native nobility. This fact was, however, no sooner made known to M. de Boëce, who had not, as it subsequently appeared, even laboured under indisposition, than he addressed a letter of respectful expostulation to the Regent, in which he expressed his concern at the necessity of interfering with the pleasure of her Majesty in the rapid disposal of his government, and assured her that he was still able and anxious to discharge the duties of the trust confided to him by the late King; informing her, moreover, that he had in his possession a grant from her royal husband, bestowing the survivorship of his appointment upon his son; of which he solicited the confirmation by herself, feeling convinced that she could never be served by a more zealous or able subject.*

Concini was accordingly divested of his government as abruptly as he had acquired it; reluctantly resigning

* L'Etoile, vol. iv, pp. 143, 144.

the coveted dignity amid the laughter and epigrams of the whole court.

In addition to these extraordinary instances of imprudence, Marie de Medicis had also compromised herself with the people by the reluctance which she evinced to investigate the circumstances connected with the murder of her husband. Ravaillac had suffered, as we have shown, and that too in the most frightful manner, the consequences of his crime; persisting to the last in his assertion that he had acted independently, and had no accomplices; but his testimony, although signed in blood and torture, had failed to convince the nation which had been so suddenly and cruelly bereft of its monarch; and sullen rumours were rife among all classes which involved some of the highest and proudest in the land.* Among these the Duke d'Epernon, as already stated, stood out so prominently that he had been compelled to justify himself, while the favour which he had so suddenly acquired turned the public attention towards the Queen herself.

Suspicions of her complicity however ill-founded, had, indeed, existed even previously to this period, for Rambure, when speaking of the visit of Sully to the Louvre on the day after the assassination, a visit in which he professes to have accompanied him, says without any attempt at disguise: "The Queen received us with great affability, and even mingled her tears

* Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 5.

and sobs with ours, although we were both aware of the satisfaction that she felt in being thus delivered from the King, *of whose death she was not considered to be wholly guiltless*, and of becoming her own absolute mistress. * * * She then addressed several other observations to the duke, during which time he wept bitterly, while she occasionally shed a few tears of a very different description."*

These assertions, vague as they are, and utterly baseless as they must be considered by all unprejudiced minds, nevertheless suffice to prove that the finger of blame had already been pointed towards the unfortunate Marie; an unhappy circumstance which doubled the difficulties of her position, and should have tended to excite her caution; but the haughty and impetuous nature of the Tuscan princess could not bend to any compromise; and thus she recklessly augmented the amount of dislike which was growing up against her.

On the 8th of July the ex-Queen Marguerite gave a magnificent entertainment to the court at her beautiful estate of Issy; on her return from whence to the capital, the Regent mounted a Spanish jennet; and, surrounded by her guards, galloped at full speed to the faubourg, where she dismounted and entered her coach, still environed by armed men. As she had her foot upon the step of the carriage, a poor woman who stood among the crowd exclaimed with an earnestness which

* Rambure, Unpublished Mém, vol. vi, pp. 44, 45.

elicited general attention: "Would to God, Madam, that as much care had been taken of our poor King; we should not then be where we are!"

The Queen paused for a moment, and turned pale; but immediately recovering her self-possession, she took her seat, and bowed affably to the people. The greeting on their part was, however, cold and reluctant. They were still weeping over the bier of their murdered sovereign, and they could not brook the apparent levity with which she had already entered into the idle gaieties of the court.*

"Only five months after Henry's assassination," says Rambure; "such of the nobles as were devoted to his memory, expressed among themselves their indignation at the bearing of the Queen; who, although compelled at intervals to assume some semblance of grief, was more frequently to be seen with a smiling countenance, and constantly followed the hunt on horseback, attended by a suite of four or five hundred princes and nobles."†

In order to avert all discontent among the people, the ministers had induced the Regent not only to diminish the duty upon salt, a boon for which they were always grateful, but also to delay the enforcement of several obnoxious commissions, and to revoke no less than fifty-four edicts which had been issued for the imposition of new taxes; while presents in money were made to the most influential of the Protestant party, and the Edict of Nantes was confirmed.

* L'Etoile, vol. iv, p. 157.

† Rambure, MS. Mém., vol. vi, p. 79.

Such was the state of the French court on the return of the Prince de Condé, whose arrival had been anxiously anticipated by his personal friends and adherents, and strongly urged by the Regent herself; but when she ascertained that a large body of nobles had gone as far as Senlis to receive him, and that among these were all the Princes of Lorraine, the Maréchal de Bouillon, and the Duke de Sully, she became apprehensive that a cabal was about to be formed against her authority; a suspicion which was augmented by the regal state in which he entered the capital, attended and followed by more than fifteen hundred individuals of rank.

Her fears were, moreover, eagerly fostered by the Count de Soissons, the Duke d'Epernon, and the Cardinal de Joyeuse; who, desirous to retain the influence which they had already acquired, neglected no method of arousing her jealousy against the first prince of the blood. In pursuance of this purpose M. d'Epernon, to whom the safety of the city had been confided during the first alarm created by the murder of the King, no sooner learnt the approach of the Prince than he doubled the guards at the different gates, and even proposed to form garrisons in the avenues leading to them; a circumstance which was immediately made known to M. de Condé, who expressed great indignation at such an imputation upon his loyalty. This affront was, however, remedied by the able courtier, who being anxious to conciliate both parties, had no sooner convinced the

Queen of his zeal for her interests, than he proceeded, accompanied by a hundred mounted followers, to welcome the Prince before he could reach the city.

M. de Condé dined at Bourget, where he expressed his acknowledgments to the several nobles by whom he was surrounded, and declared his intention of upholding by every means in his power the dignity and authority of the Regent. At the close of the repast he once more ordered his horses, and retraced his steps as far as St. Denis, where he caused a mass to be said for the soul of the deceased King, and asperged the royal coffin; after which he proceeded direct to Paris, receiving upon his way perpetual warnings not to trust himself within the gates of the capital. He, however, destroyed these anonymous communications one after the other; and was rewarded by a note hastily written by the President de Thou,* in which he was entreated to disregard the

* Jacques Auguste de Thou was the representative of an ancient family of Champagne, celebrated alike in the magistrature and the church. One of his ancestors, Nicolas de Thou, clerk of the parliamentary council, and Bishop of Chartres, performed the coronation service of Henry IV. in 1594, and died in 1598. Christophe de Thou, the brother of Nicolas, was first president of the Parliament of Paris, chancellor to the Dukes of Anjou and Alençon, and a faithful servant of Henry II., Charles IX. and Henry III., whom he served with untiring zeal during the intestine troubles of the kingdom. He died in 1582. His son, the subject of the present note, embraced the legal profession, and became, from parliamentary counsellor, president *à mortier*. In 1586, after the day of the Barricades, he left Paris, and entered

efforts which were made to dissuade him from entering Paris, where the Queen was prepared to receive him with all possible honour and welcome.

Thus assured M. de Condé, mounted upon a pied charger, which had been presented to him by the Archduke, and habited in the deepest mourning, continued his journey; having his brother-in-law the Prince of Orange on his right hand, and the Count de Beaumont on his left, with whom he occasionally conversed; but it was remarked that as he drew near the capital, he became absent and ill-at-ease; and his discomposure was destined to be increased by the circumstance that on his arrival at the Louvre the gates were closed upon the greater number of his followers, and only a slender retinue permitted to enter with him. On ascending the great staircase, in order to pay his respects to the King, he was

the service of Henry III., who confided to him several missions in England and Italy. On the accession of Henry IV., de Thou eagerly embraced his interests, and by this sovereign he was also employed in negociations of importance. At the death of Amyot he was appointed grand-master of the King's library. During the regency of Marie de Medicis he became director-general of finance; and was deputed, in conjunction with the Cardinal Duperron, to reform the University of Paris, and to aid in the construction of the royal college. Posterity is indebted to de Thou for a "History" of his time, in one hundred and thirty-eight books, embracing sixty years, from 1545 to 1607. His style is terse, elevated, and elegant; and the work is full of elaborate and most minute detail. De Thou died in 1617.

informed that his Majesty was in the Queen's apartment, towards which he immediately proceeded. His reception was gracious and affectionate; and he had no sooner knelt and kissed hands, than the Regent assured him of the joy that she felt at his return, and the confidence with that she looked forward to his advice and assistance. On quitting the royal presence, after a prolonged interview, the Prince warmly expressed his gratification at the welcome which had been accorded to him; declaring that he should for ever hold himself indebted to the Queen for an amount of affability which he could not have anticipated.

From the palace M. de Condé proceeded to his residence at the Hôtel de Lyon, accompanied by the Duke de Guise, and followed by the same suite with which he had entered the capital; and thence he hastened to the residence of the Countess d'Auvergne to greet the Princess. Their meeting was warm and affectionate; both were anxious to forget the past, and to profit by the future; while the sincerity of the reconciliation on the part of Madame de Condé was fully proved by her subsequent devotion to his interests and happiness. Their interview was a long and affecting one; and the Prince spent the remainder of the day in her society, returning, however, in the evening to the Louvre to be present at the *coucher* of the King, whom he assisted to undress; after which

he waited upon the Queen, with whom he remained until a late hour.*

The ensuing week M. de Condé was entirely occupied in receiving the visits of the nobility, who unanimously hastened to pay their respects, and to solicit his protection. He held, in fact, a species of court, upon which the favourites of the Regent did not fail to comment with an emphatic bitterness that once more awakened the suspicions of Marie; who, aware of the popularity of the Prince, was easily persuaded to believe that these demonstrations were pregnant with danger to the interests of her son; and, aware of the unstability of her own position, the prejudices which were entertained against her person, and the ambition of the great nobles, she listened with avidity to the suggestions of MM. de Soissons, d'Epernon, and de Joyeuse, that she should effect the arrest of Condé before he had time to organise a faction in his favour. In addition to the public homage of which he was the object, they pointed out to her that frequent councils were held, which were attended by all the chiefs of his party, both at the Hôtel de Mayenne and at the Arsenal, where the treasure amassed by the late King still remained under the guardianship, and at the discretion of, the Duke de Sully. They reminded her also of the manner in which the Prince had quitted the capital; and the vehemence with which he had expressed his indignation at the

* L'Etoile, vol. iv, pp. 164—169.

treatment he had received, not only to his personal friends, but also at the foreign courts which he had visited during his absence; and they besought her to take proper precautions before it became too late.*

These arguments were also warmly advocated by Concini and his wife, the Papal Nuncio, the Spanish ambassador, the Chancellor Sillery, Villeroy, Jeannin, Arnaud,†

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 9, 10.

† "Antoine Arnaud was the elder son of Antoine Arnaud, captain of the light horse, and subsequently attorney and advocate-general of Catherine de Medicis. The younger Arnaud embraced the legal profession, and became an advocate of the Parliament of Paris, where he distinguished himself by his probity and eloquence. Henry IV. rewarded his merit by the brevet of councillor of state, and Marie de Medicis appointed him advocate-general. When offered the dignity of secretary of state, he resolutely refused to accept it, representing to the Regent that he could more effectually serve her as advocate-general to the King than in the secretaryship. His able and erudite speech in the celebrated Jesuit cause tried at Paris in 1594, in the presence of Henry IV. and the Duke of Savoy, and his work entitled "The Plain and True Discourse against the recal of the Order to France," are well known. At the conclusion of the cause named above, the University offered him a handsome present; which, however, he declined, declaring that he required no recompense, and had given his services gratuitously; whereupon that learned body passed a solemn act, pledging itself to eternal gratitude alike towards him and his posterity; an obligation which it would, however, appear to have forgotten in 1656, in the case of his son. His great talents and high character procured for him an alliance with the first president, who bestowed upon him the hand of his daughter Catherine, by whom he became the father of twenty

and the celebrated Père Cotton,* who had fully possessed himself of the confidence of the Queen, and who was admitted to all her private councils.† Fortunately, however, Marie hesitated to hazard so extreme a step; and day after day went by without any hostile manifestation on the part of the Prince, who openly declared himself resolved to support her authority. As her alarm on this subject diminished, the private friends of the Queen turned their attention to other subjects of political interest; and according to the

children. Although adverse to the League, Arnaud was a member of the Romish church. He died on the 29th of September, 1619, at the age of fifty-nine years.

* Pierre Cotton, subsequently so famous as the confessor of Henry IV., was born at Néronde, in the department of the Loire, in 1564, and was received into the Order of the Jesuits in 1585, at Arona, in the Milanese, whence he was sent to Milan to study philosophy. Thence he was removed to Rome, where he remained twelve months engaged in the same pursuit; and finally he proceeded to Lyons, where he completed his education, and began to preach. During a sojourn at Grenoble he was presented to the Duke de Lesdiguières, in whom he inspired so much confidence, that it was to his good offices that he was indebted for his selection as confessor to the King. The duke having represented him as a sound and eloquent preacher, he was instructed to proceed to Paris, where his sermons having realised the report of his patron, Henry IV. at once adopted him as his director. After the death of that monarch, he was for some time the confessor of Louis XIII. In 1617 he abandoned the court, and travelled through the southern provinces as a missionary-apostle. He was the author of several controversial and religious works, and died in 1626.

† Sully, Mém., vol. viii, pp. 36, 37.

testimony of Sully, zealously employed themselves in contravening all the wishes, and disappointing all the views of Henry IV. "There can be no difficulty;" he says with a bitterness which shows how deeply he felt his own exclusion; "in deciding upon the subject of their deliberations; the union of the crowns of France and Spain, the abolition of ancient alliances with foreign powers, the abolition of all the edicts of pacification, the destruction of the Protestants, the exclusion of those of the reformed religion from places of trust, the disgrace of all who will not submit to the yoke of the new favourites, the dissipation of the treasures amassed by the late King, in order to secure the services of the greedy and the ambitious, and to load with wealth and power such as are destined to rise to the highest dignities in the realm; that is to say, a thousand projects as pernicious to the King and to the state, as they were advantageous to our most mortal enemies, such were the great object of the deliberations of these new counsellors.*

Be this as it may, it is certain that as regarded the Prince de Condé, the Queen was better served by accident than she would have been by the dangerous advice of her friends. The wise precaution which she had taken of arming the citizens of Paris, and of placing them under the command of individuals chosen by herself, and who had taken an oath of fidelity to her

* Sully, Mém., vol. viii, p. 37.

service in the Hôtel de Ville, secured the loyalty of the populace; while the jealousy of the Guises, who, even while professing the most ardent attachment to M. de Condé, were gradually becoming cooler in his cause, and quarrelling among themselves, gave no encouragement to an attempt at revolt on his part, even should he have been inclined to hazard it.

The Duke de Bouillon alone laboured incessantly to undermine the power of the Regent; and he at length suggested to the Prince, that in order to counterbalance the authority of the court, and to maintain his own rightful dignity, he would do well to return to his original religion, and to place himself at the head of the Protestants, who would form a very important and powerful party. M. de Condé, however, declined to follow this advice; protesting that he had no desire to involve the kingdom in intestine commotion, and was content to await the progress of events.* It is probable that he was the more readily induced to exert this forbearance from the extreme generosity of the Queen; who, remembering the abruptness with which he had been deprived, on the occasion of his marriage, of the many lucrative appointments bestowed upon him, hastened to present him with a pension of two hundred thousand livres; to which she added the Hôtel de Conti in the Faubourg St. Germain, which she purchased for that purpose at a similar

* Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 10.

sum; the county of Clermont, and other munificent donations.*

Nor was M. de Condé the only recipient of her uncalculating generosity, as may be gathered from the following document from the pen of Richelieu:

"The good management of the saving fund of the late King left us, when he was taken away, five millions in the Bastille; and in the hands of the treasurer of the fund from seven to eight millions more, with which he had intended to pay the army that he had raised in order to extend the limits of his glory, which would admit no others than those of the universe itself. The uncertainty in which we were left by that fatal event rendering it necessary that we should secure the safety of the state by the counterpoise of a certain body of troops, we found ourselves constrained to employ a portion of the finances in maintaining during a few months a large military force which had already been raised; so that this outlay, the funeral of the King, and the coronation of the Queen, of which the expenses were not paid, reduced these savings very considerably. After the death of that great Prince, who was the actual ruler of the state, it was impossible to prevent a certain disorder, which even went so far as to induce several individuals, who measured their deserts by their ambition, shamefully to seek, and pertinaciously to persist in demanding,

* Sully, Mém., vol. viii, p. 81, note.

benefits which they could never have hoped to secure during his lifetime. They profit by the difficulties of the period, offer to serve the state, declare how they have it in their power to injure the national interests; and, in short, make it clearly understood that they will only do their duty upon the most advantageous terms; and so conduct themselves that even those who had assisted the King in amassing his treasure, advise the Queen to yield to the exigences of the time, to open her hands, and to give largely to every one.

"In accordance with these counsels she increases the pensions and establishments of the princes, the nobles, and the old servants of the crown; she grants new ones; she augments the garrisons of her fortresses, as much to satisfy those who hold them, as for the safety of the country; and maintains a greater number of troops than formerly; the increase of these pensions amounting on an average to three millions annually. The expense of the light-horse and infantry is at present (1617) three millions three hundred thousand livres; while in 1610 it amounted only to fifteen hundred thousand francs. She makes numerous presents, and this under advice, without increasing her receipts, as well as reducing them annually two millions five hundred thousand livres by the diminution of the duty on salt; and so augments her expenses, that upon mature consideration, we shall rather be applauded for being in the state we still are after

so many necessary outlays, than blamed for having incurred them. M. le Prince (Condé) received during six years three millions six hundred and sixty thousand livres; the Prince and Princess de Conti above one million four hundred thousand; the Duke de Guise nearly one million seven hundred thousand; M. de Nevers one million six hundred thousand; M. de Longueville* one million two hundred thousand; MM. de Mayenne, father and son, two millions and several thousands; M. de Vendôme near six hundred thousand; M. d'Epernon and his children near seven hundred thousand; and M. de Bouillon near a million.

"All the marshals of France, of which the number was increased one half, received four times as much as formerly, their pensions being augmented twenty-four thousand livres, which, in six years, allowing to each one hundred and forty-four thousand livres, and calculating them at eight in number, as they have always been, makes, one with the other, one million one hundred and fifty-two thousand livres.

* Henry II., Duke de Longueville, was still a mere youth, having been born in 1595. Appointed plenipotentiary at the Congress of Munster, in 1648, as well as Governor of Normandy, he threw himself into the party of the Fronde, on the pretext of mortification at being refused the government of Havre, but in reality in compliance with the entreaties of his wife. As the result of this concession, he, in 1650, shared the imprisonment of the Princes of Condé and Conti; but having recovered his liberty during the following year, he renounced all partizanship, and died peaceably in 1663.

" Six other dukes, or officers of the crown, received the same gratification, augmenting the outlay in six years, by eighty-six thousand four hundred livres. Hence it is easy to see how the treasury of France was exhausted, since eleven or twelve articles in favour of the great nobles of the state carry off nearly seventeen millions, without including all that was paid to them in the shape of salaries and appointments, the *deniers du tallion** for their companies of men-at-arms, grants for the maintenance of the garrisons of their fortresses, and finally, without calculating the troubles occasioned by several among them; troubles which, having compelled us on three several occasions to take up arms, have cost us, upon a strict computation, more than twenty millions of additional outlay."†

We have copied this document at full length, and in this place, in order, in so far as we are enabled so to do, to exonerate Marie de Medicis from the charge of reckless extravagance unsparingly brought against her by the Duke de Sully. Richelieu himself, at the period at which this report was furnished to the ministers, was little disposed to extenuate the errors of the Regent; and cannot consequently be supposed to have volun-

* Fines paid for the commutation of offences.

† Instruction de M. de Schomberg, Comte de Monteuil, conseillier du Roi en son conseil d'état, lieutenant-général de sa Majesté ès pays de Limosin, haute et basse Marche, pour son voyage d'Allemagne, 1617. Pièces Justicatives; signed by Richelieu.

teered any palliative circumstances. Moreover, it is worthy of notice that the enormous sums registered above were not lavished upon the personal favourites of the Queen, but were literally the price paid by the nation to purchase the loyalty of its princes and nobles; a frightful state of things, which exhibits more forcibly than any argument, the utter powerlessness of Marie to restrain the excessive expenditure by which the kingdom was so soon reduced to the brink of bankruptcy.

The Regent having renewed all the alliances of France with the several European powers, they at this period, accredited extraordinary ambassadors to the French capital, to offer the condolences and congratulations of their respective sovereigns to the young King and his mother. Among these the most interesting to the personal feelings of Marie was Lord Wharton; who, in addition to the merely verbal compliments common on such occasions, presented to Louis XIII., in the name of his royal master, James I., the Order of the Garter, accompanied by his affectionate assurances that he had not forgotten the promise exchanged between himself and the late monarch, that whichever of the two survived would be as a father to the children of the other; a pledge which he declared himself to be both ready and anxious to ratify. Nor was this the first proof of sympathy which the English monarch had evinced towards Marie and her son, the court of London having immediately put on mourning on learning the death of Henry IV., and a suspension of all

public amusements having taken place throughout the capital. Gratified by so signal a demonstration of respect and regard, the Regent accordingly no sooner ascertained that the British envoy was approaching Paris, than she dispatched a party of four hundred mounted nobles to meet him outside the gates, and herself took her station at a window, in order to see him pass; a condescension which was considered to be a signal honour at that period.

The most important of these missions, politically considered, was, however, that of the Duke de Feria,* who arrived in France with a brilliant suite, charged with the most specious and high-sounding professions and promises of Philip of Spain, who pledged himself to support the regency under all circumstances, and to place at the disposal of the Queen whatever assistance she might require against both external and internal enemies. These magnificent assurances were coldly received by most of his hearers, who distrusted alike the Spanish monarch and his envoy; and who had not yet forgotten that only a few months had elapsed since Philip had himself endeavoured, not merely to dispossess Marie of her authority, but also to incite M. de Condé to dispute the throne itself with her young son. Upon the Queen and her immediate friends they, however, produced a contrary effect; her

* Lorenzo Balthazar de Figueroa and Cordova, Duke de Feria, who in 1618 was appointed Governor of the Milanese.

leaning towards the court of Spain inducing her to welcome every symptom of a desire on the part of that cabinet to maintain a good understanding with her own government. Her reception of the Duke de Feria was consequently so gracious, that he immediately proceeded to renew the negociation already mooted for the double alliance between the two nations, which must, should it ever be effected, render their interests, at least for a time, inseparable. No proposition could be more acceptable to Marie de Medicis; who, harassed and dispirited, gladly welcomed any prospect of support by which she might hope to keep her turbulent nobility in check; while Philip on his side was anxious to effect so desirable an alliance, as it would enable him, irrespectively of its contingent advantages, to gain time, and thus secure the means of settling the affairs of Germany, which were embroiled by the misunderstanding between the Emperor and his brothers.

The Spanish cabinet was, moreover, desirous of widening the breach between the Catholics and Protestants of France, an attempt in which it was zealously seconded by the Pope, who was readily persuaded that no measure could be so desirable for the accomplishment of such a purpose as an union between the two crowns. Thus the objections which had appeared insuperable to Henry IV. lost all their weight in the mutual anxiety of Marie and Philip to secure the advantages which each sought to gain; and, as the age of Louis XIII. forbade the immediate celebration of

the marriage, a private pledge was exchanged between the ministers of France and the Spanish envoy, that the Regent should not interfere with the measures of the house of Austria in Germany, while Spain should refuse all support to the malcontents in her own kingdom; and this mutual understanding once established, the double alliance was concluded.*

In the midst of the important interests by which the mind of Marie de Medicis was at this period occupied, a fresh demand upon her attention was made by Madame de Verneuil, who on the 15th of September laid before the Count de Soissons, the Cardinal de Joyeuse, and the Duke d'Epernon, the written engagement which she had received from the Duke de Guise, and urged its enforcement. Her claim was warmly espoused by M. de Soissons, who at once declared the document to be valid and unanswerable; while it was admitted by all by whom it was examined to be strictly legal in form, and to authorise her in demanding its ratification. Unlike that which she had previously extorted from Henry IV., the promise which the marquise now produced was not only signed by M. de Guise himself, but also by two notaries, a priest, and several witnesses. Unfortunately, however, whether by accident, or intention on the part of the duke, both the notaries by whom it had been attested were aged men, one of whom had subsequently died; while the other had

* Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 17. Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. xi, p. 106, 107. D'Estrées, Mém., p. 379.

become so imbecile that when interrogated upon the subject, he first doubted, and subsequently denied, all knowledge of the transaction; but as these contingencies did not affect the signature of M. de Guise himself, his position was sufficiently embarrassing; and the rather that, his passion for the marquise having been long extinguished, he had become the acknowledged suitor of the dowager-Duchess de Montpensier.

There can be little doubt that had Henry IV. still lived, Madame de Verneuil would have been enabled to enforce her claim, as that monarch would not have suffered so admirable an opportunity of mortifying the Guises to have escaped him; and thus individual imprudence would have afforded him a triumph which the fortune of arms had hitherto denied, and the most jealous watchfulness failed to secure; but his death had changed the position of all the parties interested in the affair, and Marie de Medicis looked upon it with very different feelings. Her old, and still existing hatred of the marquise was renewed by an exhibition of arrogance which recalled to memory some of the most bitter moments of her existence; and her pride as a sovereign was revolted at the prospect of seeing the woman by whom her peace had been destroyed, elevated to the rank of a princess of the blood, and placed beside the very steps of her throne.

She was, moreover, anxious to limit the power of the Count de Soissons, and to prevent the proposed

marriage of his son Louis de Bourbon with the heiress of Montpensier, which would have opened up a still wider field for his ambition. She accordingly espoused the cause of the Duke de Guise, who, having no other alternative by which to rid himself of the marquise, did not scruple to deny the authenticity of the signature ascribed to him; and he had no sooner resolutely done this, than the Regent placed the affair in the hands of the President Jeannin, who with his usual ability, at length succeeded in inducing Madame de Verneuil to withdraw her claims. Aware that he could hope nothing, either from her generosity or her dread of ridicule, the astute lawyer represented to her the inequality of the contest in which she was about to engage without any ulterior support; whereas the Duke de Guise was not only powerful in himself, but would necessarily be supported by all the members of his family, as well as protected by the Queen.

The marquise for a time affected to believe that the legality of the document in her possession must enable her to triumph even over these obstacles, formidable as they were; but Jeannin reminded her of the death of one of her witnesses, the denial of another, and the solemn declaration of the duke that his own signature was feigned; assuring her that these circumstances must prove more than sufficient to prevent the recognition of the deed in any court of law. When he found that this argument had produced the desired impression, he next proceeded to expatiate upon the benefit which

she could not fail to derive from the gratitude of the Guises, should she voluntarily withdraw her claim without subjecting the Duke to the annoyance of a public law-suit; during which, moreover, her former *liaison* with his brother, the Prince de Joinville, could not fail to be made matter of comment and curiosity. He urged upon her the propriety of avoiding a publicity which must tend to dishonour both herself and her children; and, finally, he pointed out the propriety and policy of seizing so favourable an opportunity to secure the goodwill of the Regent, who would as a natural consequence be gratified by such a concession, and thus induced to bury the past in oblivion.

Madame de Verneuil wept and argued in vain. Jeannin was too subtle an antagonist to afford her one inch of 'vantage-ground; and he so thoroughly undermined the reasonings which she advanced, that, wearied and discouraged, she at length consented to forego her claim.

Deprived of the position which she had formerly held at the court, she never re-appeared there, but spent the remainder of her life either on her estate at Verneuil, or in her hôtel at Paris, in such complete retirement that nothing more is known of her save the period of her death which took place on the 9th of February, 1633, when she had reached her fifty-fourth year.*

* Dreux du Radier, vol. vi, pp. 105—107.

CHAPTER II.

[1610.]

A TEMPORARY CALM—LOUIS XIII.—MARIE DE MEDICIS PURCHASES THE MARQUISATE OF ANCRE FOR CONCINI—RAPID RISE OF HIS FORTUNES—HIS PROFUSION—HE INTRIGUES TO CREATE DISSENSION AMONG THE PRINCES OF THE BLOOD—HIS PERSONAL ENDOWMENTS—THE DUKE DE BOUILLON ENDEAVOURS TO INDUCE M. DE CONDÉ TO REVOLT—HE FAILS—HE DISPOSES OF HIS OFFICE AT COURT TO THE MARQUIS D'ANCRE—MARIE DE MEDICIS CONTINUES THE PUBLIC EDIFICES COMMENCED AND PROJECTED BY HENRY IV.—ZEAL OF THE DUKE DE MAYENNE—CUPIDITY OF THE COURT—M. DE CONDÉ AND HIS ADVISERS—THE PRINCE AND THE MINISTER—FOREBODINGS OF SULLY—HE DETERMINES TO RESIGN OFFICE—HIS UNPOPULARITY—THE REGENT REFUSES TO ACCEPT HIS RESIGNATION—THE WAR IN GERMANY—THE REGENT RESOLVES TO DISPATCH AN ARMY TO CLÈVES—THE DUKE DE BOUILLON DEMANDS THE COMMAND OF THE TROOPS—IS REFUSED BY THE COUNCIL—RETIRES IN DISGUST TO SEDAN—THE COMMAND IS CONFERRED ON THE MARÉCHAL DE LA CHÂTRE—A BOOTLESS CAMPAIGN—THE FRENCH TROOPS RETURN HOME—NEW DISSENSIONS AT COURT—THE DUKE D'EPERNON BECOMES THE DECLARED ENEMY OF THE PROTESTANTS—APPREHENSIONS OF THE REFORMED PARTY—QUARREL OF SULLY AND VILLEROY—THE REGENT ENDEAVOURS TO EFFECT A RECONCILIATION WITH THE PRINCE DE CONTI—PRINCELY WAGES—M. DE CONTI RETURNS TO COURT—THE PRINCES OF THE BLOOD ATTEND THE PARLIAMENT—THE MARQUIS D'ANCRE IS ADMITTED TO THE STATE COUNCIL—SULLY AND BOUILLON RETIRE FROM THE CAPITAL—SULLY RESOLVES TO WITHDRAW FROM THE GOVERNMENT, BUT IS AGAIN INDUCED TO RETAIN OFFICE—THE KING AND PÈRE COTTON—THE COURT LEAVE PARIS FOR RHEIMS—CORONATION OF LOUIS XIII.—HIS PUBLIC ENTRY INTO THE CAPITAL—THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ AND THE COUNT DE SOISSONS ARE RECONCILED—QUARREL BETWEEN THE MARQUIS D'ANCRE AND THE DUKE DE BELLEGARDE—CABAL AGAINST SULLY—THE HUGUENOTS PETITION FOR A GENERAL ASSEMBLY—RELUCTANCE OF THE REGENT TO CONCEDE THEIR DEMAND—SHE FINDS HERSELF COMPELLED TO COMPLY—M. DE VILLEROY GARRISONS LYONS—SULLY RETIRES FROM THE MINISTRY—DEMANDS OF THE PRINCES—SULLY'S LAST OFFICIAL ACT—HIS PARTING INTERVIEW WITH LOUIS XIII.—THE MINISTER AND THE MOUNTEBANKS.

CHAPTER II.

[1610.]

For a short time Marie began to hope that the conciliatory measures she had adopted would ensure the tranquillity of the country over which she had been called to govern. All the cities and provinces had sworn fidelity to the King, and obedience to herself; all the governors of fortresses had followed their example; and the great nobles, whose plans were not yet matured, and whose cupidity was for the moment satisfied, testified no inclination to disturb, or to trammel the measures of the government. The relief afforded to the middle and lower classes by the diminution of some of the national imposts, and the abolition of others, began to produce its effect upon the public mind; and the young King was received whenever he appeared in public with warm and enthusiastic greetings. All the members of the house of Guise, the most traditionally dangerous enemies of the crown,

affected a respectful deference towards the Regent, and an earnest desire to uphold her authority; while the Duke d'Epernon, who had, in her first hour of trial, at once declared himself her devoted adherent, appeared to exist only to fulfil her wishes. The ministers deferred to her opinions with a respect which caused their occasional opposition to be rather matter of argument than mortification; and, finally, Concini and his wife seemed to have forgotten their own interests in those of their royal mistress.*

Meanwhile, the bearing of the young sovereign, ably prompted by the wisdom of M. de Souvré, was admirable. Gifted with an intellect beyond his years, and with an agreeable person, he soon engaged the affections of the people; who, eager to love the son of Henry IV., and to anticipate under his rule the same glory and greatness which had characterised the reign of his father, drew the most favourable auguries from his slightest actions; while the modesty of his demeanour towards the princes and nobles equally tended to establish a feeling of interest and sympathy towards his person which promised a favourable result. When he received the homage of his court on his accession he said sadly: "Gentlemen, these honours have devolved upon me too soon; I am not yet old enough to govern; be faithful, and obey the commands of the Queen my mother."†

* Richelieu, La Mère et le Fils, vol. i, p. 91.

† Mercure Français, 1610, p. 505.

Unfortunately, the ambition of Concini was more powerful than his devotion to his benefactress; and his influence continued unabated. Moreover his vanity was mortified, as he could not conceal from himself that he was indebted for his position at court, indefinite as it was, to the affection of the Regent for his wife; and he consequently urged Leonora to induce the Queen to purchase for him the town of Ancre in Picardy, whose possession would invest him with the title of marquis, and assure to him the consideration due to that rank. Madame de Concini accordingly proffered her request, which was conceded without difficulty; for Marie was at that moment, to adopt the expression of Richelieu, keeping her hands open; and this purchase formed a comparatively unimportant item in her lavish grants. Encouraged by so facile a success the Italian adventurer was, however, by no means disposed to permit even this coveted dignity to satisfy his ambition, and through the same agency he ere long became Governor of Peronne, Roye, and Montdidier, which he purchased from M. de Créquy, for the sum of forty thousand crowns. The Queen had been induced to furnish an order upon the royal treasury for this amount, which was presented without any misgiving by the exulting favourite; but M. de Villeroy, who considered himself to have been slighted on some occasion by her Majesty, refused to countersign the document, an opposition which so enraged Concini that he hastened to pour out his complaints to Marie;

who, overcome by the wrath of the husband and the tears of the wife, summoned the Duke de Sully, of whom she inquired if it were not possible to procure the amount required without having recourse to the money lodged at the Arsenal. Sully replied in the negative, declaring that the sums therein deposited were not available for such a purpose, and reminding her that seven millions of livres had already been withdrawn since the death of the King.* It was, consequently, necessary to raise the desired purchase-money by other means, which having been at length effected, Concini found himself not only placed by his court-appointment on a par with the peers of the realm, but also enabled, by the munificence of the Regent, and the revenues of his new government, to rival them in magnificence.

Then it was that his talent for intrigue boldly developed itself. In vain did his wife warn him of the danger of further forcing his fortunes, and thus drawing down upon himself the hatred and envy of the native nobility; in vain did she represent that by indulging his passion for power and display he must eventually create enemies who were certain to prove fatal to his prosperity; Concini, as weak and vain as he was greedy and ambitious, disregarded her advice, and strenuously turned his attention to fomenting a misunderstanding among the most influential of the nobles, in order to

* L'Etoile, vol. iv, pp. 191, 192.

prevent a coalition which threatened to diminish his own importance. He was well aware of his unpopularity with the princes of the blood, who could not without indignation see themselves compelled to treat with him almost upon equal terms, protected as he was by the favour of the Queen; and he consequently lived in perpetual apprehension of their forming a cabal to effect his ruin. Skilfully, therefore, with a smiling countenance, but an anxious heart, he availed himself of every opportunity to foment the jealousies and hatreds which policy had for a brief while laid to rest. To each and all he appeared zealous in their several interests, but to each and all he was alike a traitor.

Nature had been lavish to Concini; his person was well-formed and graceful, while his countenance beamed with intelligence, and gave promise of far greater intellect than he in reality possessed. It was this fatal beauty which had inspired Leonora Galigaï with a passion that was destined to be her destruction, for no doubt can be entertained that had she never become his wife her career might have been one of happiness and honour; but while Concini, absorbed in his wild schemes of self-aggrandisement, trampled upon every consideration of honour and honesty in order to attain his object, Leonora, conscious of her own want of personal attractions, and loving her husband with a devotion combined of gratitude and admiration, suffered herself to be overruled by his vanity and arrogance,

and sacrificed her reason and her judgment to her affection.

The Maréchal de Bouillon having failed in his attempt to induce M. de Condé to revolt against the authority of the Regent, by one of those sudden transitions of feeling which formed so strange a feature in his character, next sought to reconcile that Prince and the Duke de Guise, who were already at feud upon the prerogatives of their rank; and he began to anticipate a successful issue to his enterprise when the ministers, being apprehensive that a good understanding among the princes of the blood would tend to weaken their own influence over the Regent, gave him to understand that should M. de Condé and the Duke de Guise become firm friends, his personal importance in the country would be greatly lessened, if not entirely overthrown. This argument was all-sufficient with the ambitious and intriguing Bouillon, who forthwith began to slacken in his exertions to restore peace; but these had already proceeded so far as to render his position extremely embarrassing; and between his apprehension of sacrificing his own interest on the one hand, and of incurring suspicion upon the other, he was somewhat at a loss how to proceed, when the adroit interference of Concini, who deprecated the coalition of the princes as much as the ministers themselves, applied a new brand to the expiring pile, and widened the chasm between them more hopelessly than ever; and that, moreover,

with such dexterity, that M. de Bouillon never suspected what friendly hand had come to his aid; although the Italian favourite did not fail to propitiate the haughty Duke by every means in his power, and so thoroughly succeeded in flattering his vanity, and encouraging his ambitious aspirations, that, anxious to secure the interest and assistance of so influential a person as the husband of the Queen's foster-sister and confidential friend, M. de Bouillon was induced to sell to him his office of first lord of the bedchamber; a circumstance which at once secured a permanent footing at court to Concini, and opened before him a long vista of prosperity.*

One of the first decisions arrived at by the Regent was the completion of all the public edifices commenced by the late King, and the erection of such as he had resolved upon, but had not lived to commence; an admirable act of policy by which she at once evinced her respect for the memory of her husband, and procured employment for hundreds of workmen, who must otherwise have been severe sufferers from want of occupation. Those which were originated under her auspices were the castle of Vincennes and the Royal College, the latter of which she caused to be built strictly according to the design executed by Henry himself; and the first stone was laid on the 28th of August by the young King, assisted by his whole court. It

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 10, 11. D'Estrées, Mém., p, 379.

bore the arms of France and Medicis, and beneath them was inscribed in deeply-chiselled characters: "In the first year of the reign of Louis XIII., King of France and Navarre, aged nine years, and of the regency of the Queen Marie de Medicis his mother, 1610." Four medals, bearing the same inscription, two of gold, and two of silver gilt, having been placed at the corners of the stone, which was then lowered, the Duke de Sully presented the silver trowel, while two of the attendant nobles alternately offered the hammer, and the silver trough containing the mortar.

During the following month the Queen herself performed the same ceremony at Vincennes, respecting the fortress, and the magnificent tower built by Charles VII., and erecting beneath its shadow a commodious residence on the space which had heretofore been cumbered by a mass of unsightly buildings, totally incompatible for the reception of a court.*

The Duke de Mayenne, although suffering from severe indisposition, had hastened to offer his services to the Regent; who, recognising his ability, and grateful for the zeal which he evinced in her interests, expressed all the gratification that she felt at his prompt and earnest offers of aid; which he moreover followed up with such untiring perseverance that he caused himself to be conveyed every day to the Louvre in his chair, in order to discuss with her Majesty the various mea-

* Mercure Français, 1610, pp. 510, 511.

sures necessary to the peace and welfare of the state. Above all he exhorted her to restrain her munificence, by which not only the treasure-fund, but also the revenues of the country could not fail ere long to be dangerously affected; representing to her the indecency of those who, profiting by the calamity with which France had so suddenly been stricken, were endeavouring to build up their own fortunes upon the misfortune of the nation, and aspiring to honours suited only to such as by their high birth and princely rank were imperatively called upon to uphold the dignity of the crown.

This argument was warmly seconded by Sully, Villeroy, and Jeannin; but Marie had already suffered so deeply from the arrogance and presumption of the nobles, that she was anxious to purchase their support, and her own consequent tranquillity, however exorbitant might be the demands of those about her; and, accordingly, scarcely a day passed in which fresh claimants did not present themselves, while the original recipients remained still unsatisfied.*

It was not long ere the parties most interested in these donations became aware of the attempt made to limit the liberality of the Queen, and they did not affect to disguise their indignation at what they designated as an interference with their just claims. It appeared to have grown into an admitted opinion that

* Matthieu, Hist. des Derniers Troubles, Book III, p. 455.

all who had not revolted against her authority should be recompensed for their forbearance, as though it had been some signal service rendered to the state; and immediate deliberations were held as to the best measures to be adopted in order to silence the prudent counsels to which she could not finally fail to yield. As regarded the Duke de Mayenne, he was beyond the reach of the cabal; while Jeannin and Villeroy could oppose nothing save words; with Sully, however, the case was widely different; he was not only finance-minister, but also keeper of the royal treasury, and his fearless and sturdy nature was so well understood and appreciated, that none who knew him doubted for an instant that should the Regent persevere in her generosity in opposition to his advice, he would not hesitate to adopt the most extreme measures to limit her power in the disposal of the public funds.

Sully, meanwhile, like a generous adversary, had not only endeavoured to restrain the liberality of the Queen, but had even ventured to expostulate with many of the applicants upon the ruinous extravagance of their demands; a proceeding which was resented by several of the great nobles, and by none more deeply than the Prince de Condé, who was upheld in his pretensions by his adherents, all of whom alleged that as the royal treasury was daily suffering diminution, and must soon become entirely exhausted, he had a right to claim, as first prince of the blood, the largest portion of its contents after their Majesties. They also reminded him of

the offices and honours of which he had been despoiled by the late King, when he would not consent to retain them as the price of his disgrace; and, finally, they bade him not to lose sight of the fact that liberal as the Queen-Regent might have appeared on his return to France; he did not yet possess the revenues necessary to maintain his dignity as the first subject in the realm. M. de Condé was haughty and ambitious, and he consequently lent a willing ear to these representations; nor was it long ere he became equally convinced that his power was balanced by that of Sully; that a Bourbon was measured with a Béthune; a prince of the the blood with a *parvenu* minister; and that such must continue to be the case so long as he permitted money to be poised against influence.

The effect of these insidious counsels soon made itself apparent in the altered manner of the Prince towards the man whom he had thus been taught to consider as the enemy of his greatness; for although he endeavoured to conceal his growing dislike, his nature was too frank, and moreover too impetuous, to second his policy; and Sully, on his side, was far too quick-sighted to be easily duped on so important a matter. The resolution of the duke was therefore instantly formed; eager as he had been for office under the late King, he had, at the death of that monarch, ceased to feel or to exhibit the same energy. He already saw many of the favourite projects of Henry negatived; much of his advice disregarded; and as he looked into

the future he taught himself to believe that he contemplated only a long vista of national decline and personal disappointment. While he had preserved the confidence and affection of his sovereign, he had held popularity lightly, too lightly it may be, for he was conscious of his strength, and scorned to seek for support where he believed that he ought only to afford it; but the knife of Ravaillac had severed the whole tenor of his existence: he saw that he was regarded with suspicion and distrust by those who envied the greatness which he had achieved; that however the Queen might veil her real feelings in the garb of esteem and kindness, she shrank from the uncompromising frankness of his disapproval, and the resolute straightforwardness of his remonstrances; that his desire to economise the resources of the country rendered him obnoxious to the greedy courtiers: and that his past favour tended to inspire jealousy and misgiving in those with whom he was now called upon to act. He was, moreover, no longer young; his children were honourably established; and, whatever it may have accorded with the policy of his enemies to assume, there can be no doubt that M. de Sully was perfectly sincere in the desire which he at this period expressed to retire from the cares and responsibilities of office to the comfort and tranquillity of private life. That such a resolution was most unpalatable to the duchess is equally certain; but Sully nevertheless persisted in his intention, and even announced his proposed resig-

nation to the Regent, entreating at the same time that she would not oppose the measure.

The moment was one of extreme difficulty for Marie. On all sides she was pursued by complaints of the finance-minister, whose want of deference wounded the pride of the princes; while the ministers reproached him with an undue assertion of authority; and the nobles murmured at his interference in matters unconnected with his official character. The Marquis d'Ancre, and his wife were, moreover, among the most bitter of his enemies, and at this precise period their influence was all-sufficient with the Queen; who had so accustomed herself to be guided by their advice, and led by their prejudices, that they had obtained an influence over her mind which invested them with a factitious power against which few ventured to contend. She endeavoured, nevertheless, to temporise, for she was aware of the absolute necessity of securing the services of Sully until he could be satisfactorily replaced; and although there were not wanting many about her who would readily have undertaken to supersede him in his ministry, Marie herself doubted that, wherever her selection of a successor might be made, its duties would be as efficiently fulfilled. She was, moreover, at that particular time, earnestly occupied with the preparations necessary to the coronation of her son, and the retirement of Sully could not fail to involve her in embarrassment and difficulty; she consequently sought to conciliate the veteran minister; expressed her resentment at the

annoyances of which he complained; declared her perfect satisfaction with everything that he had done since the recognition of her regency; and, finally, entreated him to take time, and to reflect calmly upon the subject before he pressed her to accede to his request.

Sully complied with her wishes, but he did so without the slightest feeling of exultation. He was convinced that his favour was undermined, and his removal from office already determined; and he accordingly experienced no sensation of self-gratulation at the expressed reluctance of the Queen to deprive herself of the oldest and ablest servant of her late consort. He was, perhaps, proud of being so acknowledged; but he was also aware that what he had been to the murdered King he could never hope to become to the Regent, who had already suffered herself to be governed by greedy sycophants and ambitious favourites.

The most important subject which occupied the council at the commencement of the regency, was the question of the expediency or non-expediency of pursuing the design of the late King relative to the states of Julliers and Clèves. During the time which had elapsed since the levy of the French troops, the several pretenders to the succession had not been idle, and hostile measures had already been adopted. The Catholic princes of Germany were opposed to the claims of the Protestant party; the Dutch and Spaniards siding with the former, and the English with the latter;

several towns had already been taken by each faction; and the virulence displayed on both sides threatened the infraction of the truce with Flanders, if not an universal war throughout Christendom. Nevertheless, the general voice was against any interference on the part of France, the ministers being anxious to avoid an outlay which under the then circumstances of the kingdom they deemed alike useless and impolitic; while the nobles, fearing to lose the advantages which each promised himself by confining the attention of the Queen to the internal economy of the state, came to the same decision. Sillery alone combated this resolution, declaring that as the protection of the princes who had appealed to him for aid, had been one of the last projects of the late King, his will should be held sacred, and his intentions fully carried out.

To this declaration, which produced an evident effect upon the Regent, Sully replied by asserting that in order to have done this effectually, and with the dignity worthy of a great nation, the French troops should long ago have taken the field; whereas they had been suffered to remain so long inactive that their interference was no longer required, and could only be regarded by all parties as supererogatory, the Prince of Orange having so skilfully invested the city of Julliers that it would be impossible for the enemy to make any effectual resistance; while Austria remained perfectly inactive, evidently considering the struggle at an end.* The

* Sully, Mém., vol. viii, pp. 81—84.

argument of the chancellor had, however, decided the Queen, who exclaimed vehemently: "Say no more; I will never abandon the allies of the French crown; and you have now, gentlemen, only to decide upon what general it will be expedient to confer the command of the campaign."*

The Duke de Bouillon, on ascertaining the decision of the Regent, immediately advanced his claim. He had already become weary of the court, and he was, moreover, anxious to obtain some employment which might form an honourable pretext for his departure before the approaching coronation of the King, at which he could not assist owing to his religious principles. This difference of faith, however, determined the council to decline his services, his ambition and spirit of intrigue being so notorious as to render it inexpedient to intrust him with a command of so much importance, and one which must, moreover, bring him into constant contact with his co-religionists; a refusal by which he was so much mortified that he made immediate preparations for retiring to Sedan.† The choice of the council ultimately fell upon the Maréchal de la Châtre,‡ who was

* Mercure Français, 1610, p. 505.

† Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 11. L'Etoile, on the contrary (vol. iv, p. 132), asserts that the command was offered to Bouillon, but that he wisely declined it.

‡ Claude de la Châtre was originally one of the pages of the Duke de Montmorency, who continued to protect him throughout his whole career. He distinguished himself in several battles and

appointed chief and lieutenant-general of the King's army, consisting of twelve hundred infantry, and two thousand horse.

The brave old soldier was not, however, fated on this occasion to add to his well-won laurels, the words of Sully having been verified to the letter. Julliers was invested in the beginning of August, and on the 18th of the same month, when the French troops arrived before the city, the Prince of Orange had already made himself master of the fortress; and although the imperial general gallantly persisted in his defence, he found himself at its close compelled to capitulate, being no longer able to resist the cannonade of the enemy, who had effected an irreparable breach in one of the walls, by which they poured an unceasing fire into the streets of the town.

The capitulation was signed on the 1st of September, and executed on the morrow; after which M. de la Châtre and his forces returned to France, and the different princes who had been engaged in the campaign retired to their several states.*

Meanwhile the court of Paris was rapidly becoming a scene of anarchy and confusion. The Prince de Conti

sieges; and having embraced the party of the League, possessed himself of Berry, which he subsequently surrendered to Henry IV. At the period of his death, which occurred on the 18th of December, 1614, at the advanced age of seventy-eight years, he was Marshal of France, knight of the King's Orders, and Governor of Berry and Orleans.

* Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 13.

and the Count de Soissons were alike candidates for the government of Normandy, which the Regent, from its importance, and the physical disqualifications of the Prince, conferred, despite the solicitations of Madame de Conti, upon M. de Soissons; and she had no sooner come to this decision than the two princes were at open feud, supported by their several partisans, and the streets of the capital were the constant theatre of violence and uproar. The Duke d'Epernon was the open ally of the count, who on his side supported M. de Soissons in order to counterbalance the influence of the Prince de Conti and the Guises; an unfortunate circumstance for Marie, who had so unguardedly betrayed her gratitude for his prompt and zealous services at the first moment of her affliction, that the vain and ambitious duke had profited by the circumstance to influence her opinions and measures so seriously as to draw down the most malicious suspicions of their mutual position; suspicions to which the antecedents of M. d'Epernon unhappily lent only too much probability.*

In addition to this open and threatening misunderstanding between two of the first princes of the blood, a new danger was created by the imprudence of the same noble; who, presuming upon his newly-acquired importance, uttered the most violent and menacing expressions against the Protestants, declaring that they had been tolerated too long, and that it would soon become

* L'Etoile, vol. iv, p. 146.

necessary to reduce them to a proper sense of their insignificance; an opinion which he had no sooner emitted than the Marquis d'Ancre in his turn assured the Regent that if she desired to secure a happy and prosperous reign to her son, she had no alternative but to forbid the exercise of the reformed religion, to whose adherents the late King had owed his death.*

Conscious of the cabal which was organising against them, and having been apprised that M. d'Epernon had doubled the number of his guards, the Dukes of Bouillon, Guise, and Sully adopted similar precautions; and even kept horses ready saddled in their stables in order to escape upon the instant should they be threatened with violence. The minor nobility followed the example of their superiors, and soon every hôtel inhabited by men of rank resembled a fortress, while the streets resounded with the clashing of arms and the trampling of horses, to the perpetual terror of the citizens.

Coupled with these purely personal feuds, others were generated of an official nature, no less subversive of public tranquillity. M. de Villeroy had purchased for his son the Count d'Alincourt the government of Lyons, from the Duke de Vendôme, having at the same time disposed of the appointment of lieutenant of the King previously held by the count; and this arrangement was no sooner concluded than he resolved to solicit from the Queen a force of three hundred Swiss

* L'Etoile, vol. iv, p. 147.

guards to garrison the city; a demand in which he succeeded in interesting Concini, and to which he consequently anticipated no opposition on her part. He was correct in his conclusion, but the sole consent of the Regent did not suffice upon so important a question, which it was necessary to submit to the consideration of the council, where it was accordingly mooted. Sully, although previously solicited by the Queen to support the proposal, resolutely refused to do so, alleging that he would never consent to see the King subjected to an outlay of twelve hundred thousand livres in order to enable M. d'Alincourt to pocket one hundred thousand; and that Lyons, by the treaty concluded with the Duke of Savoy, had ceased to be a frontier town, and consequently required no garrison. This reply, which made considerable impression upon Marie, she repeated to M. de Villeroy; who retorted, loud enough to be heard by a friend of Sully, that he was aware the Spaniards and Savoyards were no longer to be feared, and that it was consequently not against them that he was anxious to secure the city of Lyons; but that the real enemies whom she had to fear were the Huguenots, who were at that moment better situated, more prepared, and probably also more inclined to oppose her authority, than they had ever before been. This intemperate and ill-judged speech was instantly reported to Sully who, rising indignantly from his seat, approached the Queen, and audibly informed her that he considered it his duty to

remark, that as in order to render her favourable to the demand of his son, M. de Villeroy had not scrupled to malign the Protestants, but had designated them as more dangerous enemies to herself and to the state than those who were labouring to further the interests of Spain, he only entreated that she would afford to his denial the same weight which she attached to the assertion of the state-secretary, and by placing both upon the same footing, exclude them equally from the council, to which neither could any longer advance a claim for admittance. To this bold and public accusation, M. de Villeroy attempted no reply; but thenceforward the two ministers no longer maintained even a semblance of amity.*

Hitherto M. de Condé had taken no part in the dissensions which were going on about him, but on the night of the 10th of July, he in his turn received a warning to be upon his guard; and in consequence he caused a strong patrol to keep watch on all sides of his palace. Not an hour passed in which the gallop of a party of horsemen was not heard clattering over the rough and ill-paved streets. At midnight the Marquis d'Ancre waited upon the Prince to convey to him an invitation from the Regent to take up his abode in the Louvre, should he not consider himself safe in his own house; but M. de Condé coldly declined to avail himself of the offer, alleging that the manner in which her

* Sully, Mém., vol. viii, pp. 121—124.

Majesty had replied on the previous day, when he had informed her of his having been assured of her intention to cause his arrest, had given him no encouragement to become her guest; an answer which by no means tended to relieve the increasing apprehensions of the Queen, who felt the necessity of appeasing, at any sacrifice, the discontent of the princes. She accordingly desired the presence of M. de Condé at the Louvre, a summons which he reluctantly obeyed; and it was long before the urbanity of her welcome assured him of the sincerity with which she entreated him to endeavour in her name to conciliate the Prince de Conti; who, on the refusal of the coveted government, had quitted Paris in disgust; and to induce his return to the court.

It was not the fashion of that period even for princes of the blood to make concessions whence they derived no personal benefit, and it was accordingly without any compunction that M. de Condé declared the terms upon which he would undertake the proposed mission. He was to receive as recompense for his condescension the sum of fifty thousand crowns, with the first government which should become vacant; and was authorised to promise two hundred thousand crowns to the Duke de Guise for the payment of his debts, as well as several lesser sums to others of the princes, on condition that they should return to their allegiance, and forego their personal animosities.

These preliminary arrangements concluded, M. de

Condé hastened to represent to his uncle the necessity of his immediate return to Paris before the departure of the King for Rheims, whither he was about to proceed for his coronation; and the Prince de Conti having with considerable difficulty been induced to comply with his request, the royal relatives entered the capital with so numerous a retinue of nobles and gentlemen that it excited general remark.

On the following day the two princes, similarly attended, and accompanied by the Duke de Guise and M. de Joinville, proceeded to the Parliament, where they took their accustomed seats; but neither M. de Soissons nor the Duke d'Epernon were present; the first pretexting indisposition, and the second declining to adduce any reason for his absence.*

On the 27th the Marquis d'Ancre was admitted into the council of state, and took the customary oaths at the Louvre; but he received few congratulations on this new honour, the arrogance in which he indulged tending to disgust the higher nobles, and to alarm those who had reason to deprecate his daily-increasing influence.

Both M. de Bouillon and the Duke de Sully professing the reformed religion, were ineligible to officiate at the coronation of the sovereign, and they accordingly received the royal permission to absent themselves, by which both hastened to profit, but from very different motives. Sully, who was well aware that he must

* L'Etoile, vol. iv, pp. 183, 184.

either voluntarily resign his governmental dignities, or submit to see them wrenched from him, proceeded to his estate at Montrond, with the firm intention of never returning to the capital; a resolve which he was, however, subsequently induced to forego, by the entreaty of the Queen that he would continue to afford to her son the same good service as he had shown to the late King his father, coupled with assurances of her firm confidence in his zeal and fidelity; while Bouillon prepared to resume his attempts to reconcile the princes, by which means he hoped to overthrow the regency, and to secure to himself a prominent position in the government of the kingdom. This effort was, however, destined to fail, too many interests adverse to any such coalition being involved in the question, to enable him to carry out his project; and he accordingly departed for Sedan, where he forthwith began to excite the Huguenots to discontent, representing that they would never have a more favourable opportunity for enforcing their rights than at a moment when the nation was shaken to its centre by the assassination of the King, and during the minority of his successor. This argument produced, as he had anticipated, a powerful effect upon the minds of his co-religionists; to whom he also expatiated on the repugnance with which the Regent conferred place or power upon a Protestant, whatever might be his personal merit. In conclusion, he urged them to demand a general assembly; a proposition to which they readily acceded, and with

the greater willingness that the time allowed to them for this purpose by the edict of 1597 would expire at the close of the year.*

Thus the weight of government pressed heavily upon Marie both from within and without; and meanwhile the young King began to betray symptoms of that suspicious and saturnine temper by which he was afterwards so unhappily distinguished. On one occasion when all the efforts of Père Cotton, his confessor, had failed to overcome his gloom and reserve, the priest inquired in a tone of interest the nature of the annoyance by which he was thus oppressed. "I shall not tell you;" was the resolute reply; "for you will immediately write to Spain to inform them."

The confessor, whose intimate connexion with the ministers of Philip had rendered him obnoxious to the French people, was startled by this unexpected answer, and immediately complained to the Queen of the affront that had been offered to him; upon which Marie summoned the offender, and insisted upon his immediately informing her who had dared to suggest such an idea; when with considerable reluctance the boy-King stated that his nurse had warned him to be cautious, because the reverend father was in correspondence with that country.

"Since she permits herself to play the politician," said the Queen; "she shall be dismissed."

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, p. 109.

"Be it so;" retorted the young Prince; "but," turning towards the Jesuit; "I shall remember that it was his work, and I shall not always be a child."

A short time subsequently while playing with a favourite fawn, he hid himself among the shrubs in the gardens of the Tuileries, and remained so long in his concealment that his attendants became alarmed, and were compelled to inform the Queen that although they had sought the King everywhere, and entreated him to return, they could not ascertain where he had gone. Marie in great alarm caused all around her to join in the search, while she remained at one of the windows in a state of agonising anxiety. At length the retreat of the fugitive was found; and M. de Souvré threatened him with the rod.

"As you please;" he said sullenly; "but if, in order to satisfy the Queen, you lay a hand upon me to-day, I will keep up appearances with you, but I will never forget it.*

Only a few days subsequently (2nd of October) Louis XIII., attended by his court, proceeded to Rheims for his coronation; the royal ornaments used upon such occasions having been removed from St. Denis to that city. The Cardinal de Joyeuse performed the ceremony, the archiepiscopal chair being vacant at the time; and the Princes of Condé and Conti, the Count de Soissons, the Dukes of Nevers, Elbœuf,† and Epernon, repre-

* L'Etoile, vol. iv, pp. 192, 193.

† Charles de Lorraine, Duke d'Elbœuf, was the grandson of

sented the ancient Dukes of Burgundy, Normandy, and Aquitaine, and the Counts of Toulouse, Flanders, and Champagne.

On the morrow the young sovereign was invested with the Order of the Holy Ghost, which he immediately afterwards conferred upon the Prince de Condé; and on Tuesday the 19th he stood sponsor for the child of the Baron de Tour; after which he proceeded to St. Marcou, where he touched a number of persons suffering under the loathsome disease which it was the superstition of the age to believe could be removed by contact with the royal hand.

On the 30th of the month the court returned to Paris, and was met at the barrier St. Antoine by the civic authorities, at the head of two hundred mounted citizens, amid a cannonade from the Bastille, and ceaseless flourishes of trumpets and hautbois. The Regent had, however, preceded her son to the city, and stood in a balcony at the house of Zamet to see him

René, Marquis d'Elbœuf, the seventh son of Claude, Duke de Guise. He married Catherine Henriette, the daughter of Henry IV. and *la belle Gabrielle*, and was involved in the intrigues of the court during the ministries both of Richelieu and Mazarin. His posterity terminated in his grandson, Emmanuel-Maurice, who died in 1763, after having served the Emperor in Naples. During his sojourn in Italy, the Duke Emmanuel built a superb palace at Portici; and it is worthy of remark that it was while searching for ancient marbles to decorate that edifice that the ruins of Herculaneum were discovered. The subject of the note died in 1657.

pass, where he no sooner perceived her than he withdrew his plumed cap, which he did not resume until having halted beneath the window he had saluted her with a profound bow. He then proceeded by torchlight to the Louvre, accompanied throughout his progress by the same acclamations of loyalty and enthusiasm as had greeted the ears of his dead father only a few months previously.

It had been a great relief to Marie de Medicis that before the departure of the court for Rheims, a reconciliation had been effected between the Prince de Condé and the Count de Soissons; but her tranquillity was not destined to last, the attendants of the Cardinal de Joyeuse and those of the Marquis d'Ancre having had a violent altercation during the journey on the subject of the accommodations provided for their respective employers; and this quarrel was no sooner appeased than the new-made marquis originated another with the Duke de Bellegarde, alleging that as first lord of the bedchamber he had a right to take precedence of the duke, who was grand-equerry of France. M. de Bellegarde, irritated by this presumption, complained loudly of the affront; and was supported in his indignation by the Duke d'Epernon and by the Count de Soissons, who was becoming weary of the Italian adventurer.

Even the Queen herself could neither support nor justify such undue pretensions; and M. d'Ancre, reluctantly convinced that he had on this occasion swooped at too high a quarry, swallowed his morti-

fication as best he might, and endeavoured to redeem his error; an attempt in which he was seconded by the Queen, in obedience to whose wishes M. le Grand somewhat contemptuously consented to forego any further demonstration of his resentment; while the Duke d'Epernon agreed, with even more facility, to follow his example. The Count de Soissons was not, however, so easily to be appeased; and he accordingly, with the ever-wakeful policy for which he was proverbial, made his reconciliation with the mortified marquis conditional upon his promise of assistance in his two darling projects of obtaining the hand of the heiress of Montpensier for his son the Count d'Enghein, and the ruin of the Duke de Sully.

At this crisis the finance-minister could ill afford to see a new antagonist enter the lists against him, surrounded as he already was by enemies eager for his overthrow. The Prince de Condé had neither forgotten nor forgiven his advice to Henry IV. to order his arrest when he fled to Flanders to protect the honour of his wife; the Duke de Bouillon was jealous of his interest with the Huguenot party; while the chancellor, Villeroy, and Jeannin were leagued against him, in order to support their own authority. To Concini, moreover, his very name was odious; and consequently the new adversary who had thus been evoked against him was the most dangerous of all, inasmuch as he was the most subtle and vindictive, and also because he possessed the ear of the Queen, who had so long

accustomed herself to support him against what he saw fit to entitle the oppression of the French nobles, that she had ceased to question the validity of his accusations. The religion of Sully also tended to indispose the Queen towards him. Herself a firm adherent of the Church of Rome, she looked with an eye of suspicion upon a minister whose faith differed from her own; and this circumstance operated powerfully in adding weight to the accusations of his enemies. The Prince de Condé alone for a time refused to sanction the efforts which were made to ensure his political ruin, but he was in his turn eventually enlisted in the cause by the prospect which was held out to him of sharing in the profits resulting from the confiscation of the minister's public property; his retirement from office necessarily involving his resignation of all the lucrative offices which he held under the government.*

* It may not be uninteresting to our readers to learn the honours and offices to which Sully had attained at the death of Henry IV. Here follow his titles: Maximilian de Béthune, Knight, Duke de Henrichemont and Boisbelle; Marquis de Rosny; Count de Dourdan; Sire d'Orval, Montrond, and St. Amand; Baron d'Espineuil, Bruyères, le Châtel, Villebon, la Chapelle, Novion, Bagny, and Boutin; King's Counsel in all the royal councils; Captain-Lieutenant of two hundred ordnance men-at-arms; Grand-Master and Captain-General of the artillery; Grand-Overseer of the highways of France; Superintendent of finance, and of the royal fortifications and buildings; Governor and Lieutenant-General of his Majesty in Poitou, Châteleraudois, and Lodunois; Governor of Mante and Gergeau, and Captain of the Bastille.

It was at this precise moment that the Huguenots petitioned the Regent for the general assembly, as advised by the Duke de Bouillon; a circumstance which could not have failed to prove fatal to the interests of Sully had he still desired to retain office, as the comments of the anti-Protestant party by which she was surrounded, seconded by her own personal feelings, tended to exasperate Marie against all who professed the reformed faith. She consequently received the appeal with considerable asperity, declaring that it was impossible to calculate the demands which would be made upon the indulgence of the crown, although there was no doubt that they would prove both unjust and extravagant; but being unable to refuse to confirm the provisions of the edict, she finally instructed the ministers to suggest delay as the best means of delivering herself for a time from the consequences of compliance.

In this attempt she, however, failed; the Duke de Bouillon being well aware that should the prescribed period be suffered to elapse without some pledge upon the part of the government, the demand would be evaded by a declaration that the allotted time was past; and accordingly the Protestants persisted in their claim with so much pertinacity that the Regent found herself compelled to authorise their meeting at Saumur in the course of the ensuing year.

Under these circumstances it is scarcely matter of surprise that despite the opposition of the finance-minister, M. de Villeroy succeeded in effecting the establishment

of a garrison at Lyons; and the misunderstanding was shortly afterwards renewed between the two functionaries by a demand on the part of the state-secretary that the maintenance of the troops should be defrayed from the general receipts of the city. The Orientals have a proverb which says, "it is the last fig that breaks the camel's back," and thus it was with Sully. Exasperated by this new invasion of his authority, he lost his temper; and after declaring that as the citizens of Lyons were at that moment as competent to protect themselves as they had ever been, and that it was consequently unreasonable to inflict so useless an outlay upon the King, he accused the chancellor, who had favoured the pretensions of Villeroy, of leaguing with him to ruin the crown; a denunciation which, as it equally affected all the other ministers who had espoused the same cause, sealed his own overthrow.*

Satisfied of a fact so self-evident, Sully resolved no longer to breast the stream of jealousy and hatred against which he found himself called upon to contend, but without further delay to resign at once the cares and dignities of office; a design which was vehemently opposed not only by his own family, but also by his co-religionists, the whole of whom, save only such of their leaders as had private reasons for seeking his dismissal, were keenly alive to a sense of the loss which their cause must necessarily sustain from the

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 109—113.

want of his support. The duke, however, firmly withstood all their expostulations; wearied and disgusted by the inefficiency of his endeavours to protect the interests of the sovereign against the encroachments of extortionate nobles, and the machinations of interested ministers, he felt no inclination to afford a new triumph to his enemies by awaiting a formal dismissal; and he accordingly took the necessary measures for disposing of his superintendence of the finance, and his government of the Bastille, (the most coveted because the most profitable of his public offices,) in order that he might be permitted in his retirement to retain the other dignities which he had purchased by a long life of labour and loyalty.*

While this important affair was in progress, the duke paid a visit to M. de Rambure, during which he said with evident uneasiness: "The Bishop of Fenouillet was with me yesterday, and assured me that in the morning a secret council had been held at the residence of the papal nuncio, at which were present the chancellor, the Marquis d'Ancre, Villeroy, the Bishop of Beziers, and the Duke d'Epernon; and that after a great deal of unseemly discourse, in which the memory of the late King was treated with disrespect and derision, it was decided that everything should be changed; that new alliances should be formed, new friendships encouraged, and new opinions promulgated. It was, moreover,

* Sully, Mém., vol. viii, pp. 125—129.

arranged that a letter should be forthwith sent to the Pope, informing him that it was the intention of France to be guided in all things by his advice, while every guarantee should be given to the Duke of Savoy until the conclusion of a proposed alliance with Spain; and, finally, that all persons adverse to this line of policy should be compelled to resign their places, especially those who professed the Protestant faith. Thus then, my good de Rambure;" he added bitterly; "if I am wise I shall quietly dispose of my places under government, making as much money of them as I can; purchase a fine estate; and retain the surplus, in order to meet such exigences as may arise; for I foresee that all the faithful servants of the late King who may refuse to defer to the authority of the Marquis d'Ancre, will have enough upon their hands. As for me," he pursued vehemently; "I would rather die than degrade myself by the slightest concession to this wretched, low-born Italian, who is the greatest rascal of all those concerned in the murder of the King." "Which," adds Rambure for himself; "he truly is."*

Every circumstance, moreover, conspired to strengthen the Duke de Sully in his resolution. He had, as we have shown, returned to the capital at the express invitation of the Regent, but he had no sooner arrived there than he discovered how little his tenure of office was really desired. As, however, both his public and

* Rambure, MS. Mémoires, vol. vi, pp. 78, 79.

private interests required his presence in Paris for a time, he considered it expedient to suppress his indignation, and to hasten his arrangements, in order to be at liberty to withdraw whenever he should be prepared to do so; and he had accordingly no sooner recovered from the fatigue of his journey than he proceeded to pay his respects to the King and his august mother.

On reaching the Louvre he was informed that Louis was at the Tuileries, where he would spend the morning, and that the Regent dined at the Hôtel de Zamet; upon which the duke determined to proceed thither, where he found her, attended by the Duke de Villeroy, Bassompierre, M. and Madame d'Ancre, and the principal members of her household. As Sully was announced Marie uttered a gracious welcome, and ungloving her hand, presented it to him to kiss; which he had no sooner done, than she assured him of her continued regard, and requested that he would talk no more of retiring from the service of the King, whose youth and helplessness rendered the good offices of those who had enjoyed the confidence of his royal father doubly necessary to himself; and, finally, despite all which had previously occurred, the duke took his leave, almost shaken in his belief that Marie had been induced to sanction his dismissal.

This illusion was, moreover, encouraged by the conduct of the courtiers, who had no sooner ascertained the nature of his reception by the Queen, than they

flocked to the Arsenal to compliment him upon his return to court; and Zamet took an opportunity to impress upon him that he was indebted for the undisguised favour of Marie to the influence of the Marquis d'Ancre; who subsequently visited him in his turn, but so visibly with the intention of inducing him to uphold the extravagant pretensions which he was about to advance, that Sully did not disguise his disgust, and they separated mutually dissatisfied.

On the morrow the duke proceeded, according to appointment, to the Louvre, where he was immediately admitted to the private closet of Marie; but he had scarcely crossed the threshold ere he became aware that his contention with Concini had induced a coldness on the part of the Regent which she strove in vain to conceal. She, however, made no allusion to their interview; confining her complaints to the extortionate importunities of the great nobles, which she declared her resolution to resist; and, by referring them to the council, causing them to be subjected to so rigorous an examination as must tend to their diminution. She then placed in the hands of the finance-minister a list of the demands which had been made upon her, entreating him to assist her in opposing claims that would end, if satisfied, by ruining the interests alike of the King and of the nation; and she concluded by pledging her royal word that she would uphold the duke in his opposition, as resolutely as ever he had been supported in his former measures by the deceased

monarch. More and more bewildered by this apparent inconsistency, Sully respectfully took possession of the document, declaring his perfect willingness to serve both her Majesty and the state, by every means in his power; and he then awaited her pleasure upon other matters of more public importance; but on all else Marie was silent, and the disappointed minister at length withdrew to examine the paper which had been delivered to him, and of which we will transcribe the principal contents as singularly exemplative of the venal state of the court at that period.

The Prince de Condé demanded the captaincy of the fortress of Château-Trompette, the government of Blaye, and the principality of Orange to the bank of the Rhône; the Count de Soissons solicited the captaincy of the old palace of Rouen, and the fortress of Caen, with the tax upon cloth, flax, and hemp, which he had previously endeavoured, as elsewhere stated, to obtain from Henry IV.; the Duke de Lorraine asked the payment in full of the whole sum specified in his treaty, although he had previously consented to accept two-thirds of the amount; the Duke de Guise demanded the royal assent to his marriage with Madame de Montpensier, the revocation of all the patent taxes in Provence and the port of Marseilles, and the liquidation of his debts; the Duke de Mayenne, who had warned the Regent to resist the extravagant pretensions of the princes, also came forward with a demand for large sums independently of those insured to him by his

treaty; the Duke d'Aiguillon* sought to obtain a donation of thirty thousand crowns, the governments of Bresse and the city of Bourg, together with the embassy to Spain, and enormous appointments: the Prince de Joinville, so lately an exile from the court, requested the government of Auvergne, or failing this, that of the first province which should become vacant; the Duke de Nevers asked for the entire proceeds of the tax upon salt produced in the Réthelois, with the governments of Mézières and Sainte-Menehould; the Duke d'Epernon demanded the command of a corps of infantry, to be constantly kept in an efficient state, the survivorship of his governments for his son, and that fortifications should be formed at Angoulême and Saintes, with three or four other equally important concessions; the Duke de Bouillon sought the liquidation of some alleged debts, the proceeds of the excise, and salt duties, and all other imposts levied in the viscounty of Turenne, the arrears of pay due to his garrisons, the liquidation of all pensions which had been discontinued during his exile, with the royal assent to a general assembly of the Protestants; the chancellor followed with a demand of all the fees appertaining to the lesser seals, that the salary of his office should be doubled, and that he should have letters of nobility in Normandy. All the officers of the crown sought an increase of twenty-four thousand livres to their several pensions; members of the council, augmented

* Henry de Lorraine, Duke d'Aiguillon, peer of France, elder son of the Duke de Mayenne.

appointments; governors of provinces, the revenues of those provinces which had hitherto reverted to the crown; municipal companies, exemptions and privileges previously unthought of; and, finally, Concini, who had arrived in the French capital only a few years previously comparatively destitute, set forth his requirements to be these: the *bâton* of a marshal of France, the governments of Bourg, Dieppe, and Pont-de-l'Arche, the proceeds of the salt duties of Languedoc, and those of the reduction accorded at Moissets and Feydant.

Such, and much more of the same description, were the contents of the document upon which the wrath of Sully scarcely permitted him to dwell with patience. It was a chaos whence he dreaded even to attempt to draw the elements of order, feeling as he did that every concession made to one of the parties must necessarily evoke the jealousy and indignation of another, while it was utterly impossible, and would moreover, be dangerously impolitic in any case, to satisfy the pretensions of all. The enormous sums produced by the imposts, whose transfer from the crown to individuals was thus unblushingly demanded, would have rendered the princes to whom they might be granted more wealthy than many of the petty sovereigns of Europe; while the governments and provinces sought to be obtained by others must inevitably make them independent of the King, and thus place the subjects who should have been the support of the throne, in direct rivalry with their sovereign. The finance-minister was aghast; and

the more earnestly he considered the subject, the more he became convinced that there was no alternative save to negative all these egregious claims *en masse;* a conviction which satisfied him that by fearlessly adopting this course, his tenure of office would, had he still desired to contend with the cabal which had already been formed against him, become utterly impossible.

Nevertheless Sully did not shrink from what he considered an imperative duty; and accordingly he resolved no longer to trust the lip-deep assurances by which he had been beguiled since his return to court, but immediately to declare his resignation of office, and to follow it up by the most resolute and determined opposition.*

He had no sooner, therefore, irrevocably arrived at this decision, than he addressed a letter to the Regent, in which he requested her permission to retire from the government; and, satisfied that his suit must prove successful, he calmly awaited her reply. Meanwhile, resolved that no reproach should be cast upon him after his departure, he demanded an audience of the King, in order to explain to him the exact state of the royal treasury, and the manner in which its contents had been diminished since the demise of his royal father; but as a private interview with so mere a child would not have satisfactorily sufficed to accomplish this object, Sully produced his papers before all the

* Sully, Mém., vol. viii, pp. 109—118.

members of the royal household; and while engaged in the necessary explanation, he remarked that the antiquated fashion of his costume, which he had not changed for years, had excited the hilarity of the younger courtiers. He suddenly paused; and after glancing coldly round the giddy circle, looked fixedly at the young monarch, and said with a dignity which chased in a instant every inclination to mirth in the by-standers: "Sire, I am too old to change my habits with every passing wind. When the late King, your father of glorious memory, did me the honour to confer with me upon state affairs, he was in the habit of previously clearing the apartment of all buffoons and mountebanks."*

To the princes of the blood, the ministers of state, and the nobles of the court, Sully that day added to the list of his enemies the boy-courtiers of the royal circle.

Thus in heart-burning and uncertainty closed the year which had commenced with the assassination of the King. An arrogant and unruly aristocracy, a divided and jealous ministry, and a harassed and discontented population were its bitter fruits.

* Bonnechose, vol. i, p. 450.

CHAPTER III.

[1611.]

A COLD CORRESPONDENCE — INCREASING INFLUENCE OF THE MARQUIS D'ANCRE—ANIMOSITY BETWEEN THE DUKE D'EPERNON AND CONCINI—DISUNION OF THE PRINCES OF GUISE AND LORRAINE — RENEWED DISSENSIONS BETWEEN M. DE BELLEGARDE AND THE MARQUIS D'ANCRE —THEY ARE RECONCILED BY THE COUNT DE SOISSONS—MARRIAGE OF THE DUKE DE GUISE — JEALOUSY OF M. DE SOISSONS — QUARREL BETWEEN THE PRINCE DE CONTI AND THE COUNT DE SOISSONS—MISSION OF THE DUKE DE GUISE — A NEW RUPTURE — INTERVENTION OF THE DUKE DE MAYENNE—ALARM OF THE REGENT—SULLY LEAVES PARIS—MADAME DE SULLY—RETIREMENT OF M. DE THOU—UNPOPULARITY OF THE DUKE D'EPERNON—MARIE DE MEDICIS ENDEAVOURS TO RECONCILE THE PRINCES—THE ROYAL CLOSET—THE PROTESTANTS PREPARE FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY—THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ RETIRES TO GUIENNE —THE DUKE D'EPERNON IS CHARGED TO WATCH HIS MOVEMENTS—ARROGANCE OF CONCINI—CONCINI SEEKS TO MARRY HIS DAUGHTER TO A SON OF THE COUNT DE SOISSONS—INDIGNATION OF THE PRINCE—CUNNING OF CONCINI—BOUILLON RETURNS TO COURT—HE OFFERS HIS SERVICES TO THE REGENT AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY—HE PROCEEDS TO SAUMUR—HE DESIRES TO BE APPOINTED PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLY — HE IS REJECTED IN FAVOUR OF M. DU PLESSIS-MORNAY — HE ATTRIBUTES HIS DEFEAT TO SULLY—HE RESOLVES TO CONCILIATE THE EX-MINISTER OF FINANCE—MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY—THE COURT RESOLVES TO DISSOLVE THE MEETING—PRUDENCE OF DU PLESSIS-MORNAY —DEATH OF M. DE CRÉQUY—THE MARQUIS D'ANCRE SUCCEEDS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF AMIENS — HIS INSOLENT DISREGARD OF THE ROYAL PREROGATIVE—INDIGNATION OF THE MINISTERS—THE REGENT RESENTS HIS IMPERTINENCE — SHE REFUSES TO RECEIVE MADAME D'ANCRE — INTRIGUES OF THE PRINCESS DE CONTI—THE FAVOURITES FORGIVEN — MARIE DE MEDICIS ISSUES SEVERAL SALUTARY EDICTS — COURT FESTIVITIES—THE DUCHESS OF LORRAINE ARRIVES AT FONTAINEBLEAU —DEATH OF THE DUKE DE MAYENNE—DEATH OF THE QUEEN OF SPAIN —THE DUCHESS OF LORRAINE CLAIMS THE HAND OF LOUIS XIII. FOR HER DAUGHTER—DEATH OF THE DUKE D'ORLEANS—DEPARTURE OF THE DUCHESS DE LORRAINE — RIVAL CLAIMS — M. DE BRÈVES APPOINTED PRECEPTOR TO THE DUKE D'ANJOU—THE COUNT DE SOISSONS APPLIES FOR THE DUCHY OF ALENÇON—REBUKE OF THE REGENT—A HUNTING-PARTY—A NEW CABAL—RECAL OF THE MARÉCHAL DE LESDIGUIÈRES—MARIE DE MEDICIS PURCHASES THE HÔTEL DE LUXEMBOURG.

CHAPTER III.

[1611.]

THE first political event worthy of record which occurred in France at the commencement of the year 1611, was the retirement of the Duke de Sully; who, on the 24th of January, received the reply of the Regent to the letter in which he had solicited her permission to withdraw from the government. It contained a faintly-expressed regret at the resolution he had taken; "but that," as he himself says, "was merely for form's sake;"* and the accuracy of his judgment is evidenced by the fact that only two days after he had again written to declare that his determination was unalterable, the Duke de Bouillon delivered to him the official warrants by which he was discharged from his duties of superintendent of finance, and captain of the Bastille. These were

* Sully, Mém., vol. viii, p. 129.

worded in the most flattering terms; and he was guaranteed against all inquiry or annoyance upon either subject from the day in which he resigned his tenure of office. A third warrant was, moreover, added, by which, in consideration of his past services, the Queen bestowed upon him the sum of three hundred thousand livres; and a few days subsequently he received letters from the King and the Regent authorising him to transfer the command of the Bastille to M. de Châteauvieux;* which he had no sooner done than he turned all his attention to the final arrangement of his public accounts, in order that he might, with as little delay as possible, be enabled to quit the capital.†

The transfer of the Bastille was shortly afterwards followed by that of the ministry of finance, which was placed under the joint direction of M. de Châteauneuf,‡ and the Presidents de Thou and Jeannin; the latter

* Joachim, Sire de Châteauvieux, had been captain of the body-guard to Henry IV.

† Sully Mém., vol. viii, pp. 133, 134.

‡ Charles de l'Aubespine, Marquis de Châteauneuf-sur-Cher, was born on the 22nd of February, 1580. He was abbot and subdean of Preaux, and was successively ambassador to Switzerland, Holland, Brussels, England, and Venice. On the 14th of November, 1630, he was appointed keeper of the seals of France; was deprived of his office on the 25th of February, 1633, and recalled on the 2nd of March, 1650. He, however, voluntarily resigned the appointment on the 3rd of April, 1651, and retired from the court. He died at Leuville, on the 17th of September, 1653.

of whom was, however, invested with the rank of comptroller-general, which gave him the entire management of the public funds, to the exclusion of his colleagues, who were in consequence only eligible to assist in the official distribution of the public monies. The charge of grand-master of the artillery, which was resigned with the command of the Bastille by Sully, the Regent retained in her own hands.*

From that time the Marquis d'Ancre became pre-eminent at court; and not only the ministers, but even the princes of the blood themselves, looked with distrust upon his power over the Queen. Between the Italian favourite and the Duke d'Epernon especially, a feeling of hatred had grown up, which, although as yet veiled by the policy for which each was so distinguished, only awaited a fitting opportunity to reveal itself on both sides; and the struggle for power was not the less resolute because it was carried on amid smiles and courtesies. Meanwhile, also, the Princes of Guise and Lorraine evinced symptoms of disaccord, which threatened the most serious consequences; and amid all this chaos of conflicting interests and passions, the royal authority was treated with contempt, and Marie began to tremble for the stability of her regency.†

Early in the month Concini entered upon his duties as first lord of the bedchamber, and had a serious

* D'Hericourt, Hist. de France, vol. i, p. 524.

† Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 16, 17.

misunderstanding with the Duke de Bellegarde, who refused to allow him to take possession of the apartments in the Louvre set apart for the person holding that rank during the year in which he was on duty, on the pretext that the marquise his wife being already lodged in the palace, he had no right to claim any further accommodation. Concini insisted on the privilege of his office, upon which M. le Grand, to whom he had become hateful from his arrogance and pretension, retorted in a manner which excited his temper; and high and bitter words were exchanged that threatened the most serious results, when the Italian, suddenly recollecting that he was exasperating by his violence an enemy too powerful for him to contend against without support, declared that he would pursue the quarrel no further in person, but would place his honour in the hands of the Count de Soissons, and abide by his decision. Against such a determination M. de Bellegarde had, of course, nothing to urge; and the Italian forthwith requested the Marquis de Cœuvres, in whom M. de Soissons had great confidence, to represent the affair to that Prince, and to asssure him that he would be entirely governed by his advice.

The Duke d'Epernon, delighted to find that Concini had made a new enemy, strenuously exerted himself to induce M. le Grand to maintain his ground, a counsel which the latter was well disposed to follow; but the Count de Soissons, who was anxious to secure

the influence of the Italian marquis that he might the more readily effectuate the marriage of his son, eagerly embraced so favourable an opportunity of purchasing his good offices; and consequently represented in stringent terms to his opponent the utter impracticability of refusing to concede to M. d'Ancre the same consideration and indulgence which had been enjoyed by his predecessors in office, together with the danger that he personally incurred by so gratuitously offending an individual protected by the Regent. Whatever arguments he may, moreover, have advanced it is impossible to decide; suffice it that the duke yielded; the quarrel was terminated, and Concini established in the coveted apartments; at which his gratification was so unmeasured that he pledged himself to M. de Soissons to induce the ministers to consent to the union of the Count d'Enghien with the heiress of Montpensier, as well as to exert himself to prevent the marriage of the Duke de Guise and the duchess her mother.*

On the 5th of January the marriage of the Duke de Guise and the Duchess de Montpensier was, however, celebrated by the Cardinal de Joyeuse at the early hour of four in the morning, in the chapel attached to the hôtel of the lady; an arrangement which was in all probability caused by the opposition made to this alliance by the Count de Soissons, who, still antici-

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 121, 127.

pating an union between his son and the daughter of the duchess, was apprehensive that Madame de Montpensier might be induced to enrich the family of which she thus became a member, with no inconsiderable portion of the wealth which must otherwise become the property of the young heiress.

Only three days subsequently, while the court were still occupied with the festivals which took place on the occasion, the Prince de Conti and his brother M. de Soissons, who was on his way to the Louvre, unfortunately met in a narrow street leading to the Cross of Trahoir, when it had become so dusk that it was impossible to distinguish the appointments or liveries of either equipage; and the carriages were no sooner entangled than the coachman of the count, ignorant of the rank of his opponent, compelled the servants of the Prince to make way, an insult which he resented with a bitterness that induced him to refuse the apology subsequently proffered by his brother.*

Alarmed by this new feud, the Queen requested the Duke de Guise to see the Prince de Conti, and to entreat of him to effect a reconciliation with his turbulent brother, a mission which the young Duke cheerfully undertook; but it unfortunately happened that in order to reach the Abbey of St. Germain where M. de Conti was then residing, it was necessary for him to pass beside the Hôtel de Soissons, which he accord-

* D'Estrées, Mém., p. 384, édit. Petitot, suite de Bassompierre.

ingly did, followed by a retinue of thirty horsemen. This circumstance was construed into a premeditated insult by the count, who immediately assembled his friends, and informed them that he had been braved in his own house by the Duke de Guise; whose adherents had no sooner ascertained that there was an assemblage hostile to his interests forming at the Hôtel de Soissons, than they in their turn flocked in such numbers to afford him their support, that in a short time more than a thousand nobles were collected in his saloons.

When this fact was communicated to M. de Soissons, he sent to request that the Prince de Condé would accompany him to the Louvre, to demand from the Regent that she should afford them satisfaction for the insolence of the Duke de Guise; who, when summoned to explain his motives for inflicting an affront upon the count, simply and calmly replied that he had never sought to insult M. de Soissons; but had, in obedience to the command of her Majesty, been compelled to pass an angle of his hôtel, which he had moreover done without a demonstration of any description, and accompanied only by the suite suitable to his rank. That his sincere anxiety had been to second the wishes of her Majesty; and that so far from seeking to increase an unfortunate misunderstanding which could only tend to involve the court in new disorder, he had from the first moment resolved not to offer an

opinion upon the merits of the feud; a determination to which he still meant to adhere.

This manly declaration in no degree softened the ire of the count; who, enchanted at having discovered an opportunity of annoying and harassing M. de Guise during the first week of his marriage, retorted in a manner which induced the Queen to request that each would retire to his hôtel; and to express at the same time her earnest hope that a little calm reflection would induce the disputants to become reconciled.

The quarrel was nevertheless sustained throughout the whole of that and the following day; and so great was the commotion which it excited in the capital that the Regent, apprehending its result, considered it necessary to order that chains should be in readiness to be stretched across the streets, and that the citizens should be prepared to take up arms at a moment's notice. On the morrow new efforts were made to pacify the irritated parties, but all having alike failed, a party of the royal guard was stationed near the person of each of the princes in order to ensure his safety.*

Meanwhile, the Queen requested of M. de Guise, by a confidential messenger, that he would wait upon the Count de Soissons, and apologise for having inadvertently given him offence; a proposition to which he readily consented; feeling that such was in reality the

* Bassompierre, Mém., p. 75.

case, and that the rank of the count as a prince of the blood demanded this concession. Previously, however, to putting his design into execution, he informed the Duke de Mayenne of the promise which he had made to comply with the desire of the Regent, when he was instantly and vehemently dissuaded from his purpose; M. de Mayenne representing that being himself the party aggrieved by the groundless accusation brought against him, he could not, without a defalcation of the dignity due to his position, personally declare his regret for an act which he had never committed. He then counselled the duke to place the affair in his hands, alleging with a sophistry which it is difficult to reconcile with reason, that an apology made for him, instead of by him, would at once answer every purpose, and spare his own pride.

M. de Guise who throughout the whole transaction would appear to have been impatient to rid himself of all trouble and annoyance, and consequently careless by what means it was terminated, readily accepted the offer; and the Duke de Mayenne accordingly repaired to the palace, where he informed the Queen that he was authorised by his nephew to offer his excuses for the displeasure which he had unconsciously given to his Highness the Count de Soissons; to which he begged to add the assurance that the house of Guise, individually and collectively, were desirous to live upon terms of friendship and courtesy with the

count, if he would accept their advances in the same spirit.*

Delighted by the prospect of restored peace, Marie made no comment upon the fact that the Duke de Guise had failed to fulfil the promise which he had made of offering his own apology to the Prince. She was terrified by the anarchy that had grown up about her, and by the facility with which those who should have been the most earnest supporters of the dignity and safety of the crown, found means to involve the court in confusion and cabals; a fact which moreover tended to place her more completely in the power of Concini and his wife than she would probably ever have become under other circumstances.

On the 14th of January in the present year the Regent, through the active agency of Concini, gave her solemn consent to the marriage of the Count d'Enghien with Mademoiselle de Montpensier, despite the opposition of the Cardinal de Joyeuse, the Duke d'Epernon, and a number of the court nobles, who were alarmed at the prospect of so close an alliance between M. de Soissons and the Duke de Guise.

The next event of interest was the final departure of M. de Sully from the capital, who, previously to quitting Paris returned to the Regent the warrant for three hundred thousand livres with which she had,

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 224, 225.

as she declared, sought to repay his past services. The letter by which the deed was accompanied was, although perfectly respectful, haughty, cold, and resolute: nor did the duke make an effort to disguise from her that the onerous duties which he had performed to the late monarch, to the nation, and to herself, could not be repaid by an order upon the royal treasury; while his retirement was voluntary, and not intended to be contingent on any such arrangement. The court gossips were merry with an altercation which they declared to have taken place between the duke and duchess on the occasion of this transaction, Madame de Sully, whose vanity was wounded by the loss of dignity and influence consequent on the retirement of her husband, considering this additional pecuniary sacrifice alike idle and uncalled-for, and reproaching him with undue haughtiness in thus refusing the last favour which the Regent had desired to confer upon him; and the ex-minister retorting by reminding her that she, at least, had no cause for complaint, since from the obscure condition of the daughter of a petty chicaner and lawyer he had elevated her to the rank of a duchess, and made her the companion of princes.*

When the dismissal of Sully had been decided, it will be remembered that de Thou was one of those appointed to succeed him in his office, as a director of

* L'Etoile, vol. iv, p. 206.

finance. The appointment was not, however, accepted; M. de Harlay, fatigued and disgusted by the intrigues which daily grew up about him, being anxious to resign his office of first president of the Parliament, which had previously been held by Christophe de Thou, to a son so worthy of inheriting his honours: the younger de Thou was moreover his brother-in-law, and he anticipated no difficulty in transferring his charge to that minister. Even to the last he was, however, fated to disappointment; for not only was this nomination opposed by the Pope, but Villeroy, who desired to see the place bestowed upon one of his own adherents, had sufficient influence with the Regent to induce her to confer it upon M. de Verdun, over whom he possessed an unlimited control.*

This affront so deeply wounded M. de Thou that he resigned the office which he had previously held, and even refused to obey the summons of the Regent, conveyed to him through the Marquis d'Ancre; alleging that she had treated him with so much disrespect, and had subjected him to so much mortification, that he must decline an interview. In vain did Concini impress upon him that the Queen was willing to allow him to name his own successor, and to indemnify himself as he considered just; he would listen to no conditions. To every argument he coldly replied: "She has treated me ill, and I will not go."

* D'Estrées, Mém., p. 385.

"You are a philosopher," said the Italian sarcastically.

"I had need be one," was the calm retort; "when I consider how I have been used."

Concini reported the ill-success of his mission, but Marie, unfortunately blinded by those about her to her real interests, was indifferent to the just resentment of an able and faithful servant. "*Non lo faro mai;*" was her only remark; and one of the most efficient and zealous of her ministers was carelessly cast off.*

Meanwhile the jealous dissensions of the nobles continued to increase, and constant quarrels took place between the Cardinal de Joyeuse, the Count de Soissons, and the Duke d'Epernon. The latter was, at this period, detested by all other aspirants to royal favour; his rapid success at court had made him insolent; and he advanced such preposterous claims, and arrogated to himself such an overweening right to the gratitude and indulgence of the Regent, that the princes of the blood took the alarm, and the Prince de Condé and the Count de Soissons resolved to effect his disgrace. Concini, as we have already shown, had long nourished the most bitter resentment against one whom he considered as a formidable rival in the good graces of the Queen; and he was consequently induced without difficulty to join in the conspiracy; his vanity suffering bitterly from the contempt with which he was ostentatiously

* L'Etoile, vol. iv, pp. 210, 211.

treated by the duke, who was, as the Italian asserted, a mere gentleman of fortune like himself, until raised to his present rank by the favour of Henry III., a favour as ill-gained as it was unbecomingly exhibited. M. d'Epernon, with an absence of tact as astonishing as it was lamentable in a man whose ambition was unbounded, and who had no party to support his pretensions against the princes of the blood, by affecting to brave it, lent himself meanwhile by his puerile and headstrong folly to their enmity; and after a sharp altercation with M. de Soissons, who did not conceal his intention to insult him whenever and wherever they might meet, the infatuated duke, on the pretext that he considered his personal safety endangered by the menaces of the Prince, paraded the streets of Paris with a retinue of seven or eight hundred mounted followers; and occasionally proceeded on foot to the Louvre, with his guards ranged in order of battle, and in such force that the van had frequently reached the gates of the palace before the rear had quitted those of the Hôtel d'Epernon; a distance of two thousand paces.*

This external affectation of almost regal state did not, however, prevent him from experiencing the most bitter mortification at his exclusion from all public affairs. He still considered that as he had been the first to swear fealty, and to place his services at the command of the Regent, he had a right to retain the

* Le Vassor, Hist. de Louis XIII., vol. i, pp. 57, 58.

supremacy which he had then assumed; and this arrogant pretension enabled him for a time to support the daily affronts to which he was subjected; but it soon became apparent that his position must ere long become untenable.

The Cardinal de Joyeuse, whose favour depended upon that of the Duke d'Epernon, having perceived that his credit with the Regent was on the decline, determined to proceed to Rome. He accordingly took leave of the King and his mother, and left France; while M. d'Epernon endeavoured to affect a reconciliation with the Count de Soissons, an attempt which was repulsed with resolute coldness on the part of the Prince, who was daily attaching himself more and more to the interests of Concini.

Early in the spring the court left Paris for Fontainebleau, accompanied by all the princes of the blood; and during their sojourn in that palace Marie de Medicis constantly caused M. de Soissons and the Dukes of Guise and Epernon to form her party at *prime*, trusting that constant companionship, and the equal favour which she was cautious to show to all, might tend to a general reconciliation.*

These efforts on the part of the Regent, however, were of little avail; individual jealousies and individual interests absorbed all the great nobles of the court; and every concession to which they were induced was

* Bassompierre, Mém., p. 77.

purchased at a price, and even then ungraciously conceded. Marie de Medicis at times lost alike courage and temper under the difficulties by which she was beset; and on one occasion, when she had retired to her closet, after having occupied herself for a time with the transaction of public business, she gave way to a train of thought so agitating and so painful, that she suddenly rose, and summoned the ladies of her suite to her presence. Mesdames de Conti, du Fargis, and de Fervaques hastened to obey her commands; and as the tapestry fell behind them, the Queen-mother silently, but with an imperious gesture, motioned them to be seated. A deep spot of crimson burned on the cheek of Marie, and there was a harsh glitter in her eye which betrayed the coming storm; nor was it long ere it burst forth.

"I have asked your presence, Mesdames," she said, fixing a stern look upon the Princess de Conti; "when you were each, in all probability, more pleasantly engaged than in sharing the disquiet and *ennui* of your harassed mistress; but, *per Dio!* the present position of affairs leaves me no alternative, my own thoughts having become—thanks to those who should lend their assistance in bearing the grievous burthen which has been thrust upon me—but sorry companions. The princes are still conspiring against my authority, and questioning my acts, as though I were responsible to each and all of them for the measures which I consider it expedient to adopt. According to the creed of these

gentlemen, the Regent of France should be but a mere puppet, of which they, at their good pleasure, may pull the strings. Scarcely have I recalled them to court; scarcely have I restored them to favour, than they organise new cabals, excite the nobles to discontent, and breed discord, alike in the Parliament, and among the people. What more can they require at my hands than what I have already bestowed? The national treasury is well nigh exhausted in meeting their demands. Look back an instant; M. de Condé has, within the last two years, received more than nine hundred thousand crowns—the Count de Soissons six hundred thousand—and MM. de Longueville, d'Epernon, and de Vendôme two millions among them! Nor is this all: in contenting them I have been compelled to lavish enormous sums upon others, who would have considered themselves aggrieved had they not also shared in my munificence. But let these proud spirits—who, despite their noble blood and their princely quality, do not disdain to barter their loyalty for gold—let them beware lest they urge me beyond my patience. Your brothers and brothers-in-law, Madame la Princesse, will do well to be warned in time. They are playing a hazardous game. If they believe that by exhausting the royal treasury they will succeed in rendering themselves masters of the kingdom, they are deceived; the Queen-mother watches alike over the life and the crown of her son. Once more I say, let them be warned in time; not a plot, not a cabal

shall escape my knowledge; and should they disregard the caution which I now condescend to give them through yourself, they will learn too late what it is to incur the vengeance of Marie de Medicis."

The silence of a moment succeeded to this outbreak of impassioned eloquence; for Madame de Conti, fearful of augmenting the anger of her royal mistress, ventured no reply; and after a brief struggle with herself the Queen-mother smoothed her ruffled brow, and forcing a smile to her still quivering lips, she resumed in an altered tone: "Enough of this, however; tell me now somewhat of your ballet of last night, Princess: you have as yet made no mention of its success."

"I awaited the commands of your Majesty, ere I intruded the subject;" replied Madame de Conti coldly; "its success was all that I could desire."

"Did the Duke de Guise honour your festival with his presence? He seldom, as I am aware, encourages our court frivolities."

"MM. de Condé and de Guise were both among my guests, Madam; and I could have ill brooked the absence of either."

"Ay, ever together, in feast and feud;" murmured Marie bitterly to herself. "And Bassompierre?" she pursued aloud; "the gallant courtier who has as many mistresses as I have halberdiers in my body-guard, and who creates an atmosphere of gladness about him, be he where he may; was he as gay and gorgeous as his wont?"

"Your Majesty is probably not aware," replied Madame de Conti with increased formality, "that M. de Bassompierre has quarrelled with one of my relatives; a circumstance which deprived me of the honour of his presence."

"And the Marquis d'Ancre?" demanded the Queen-mother abruptly; "did he at least partake of your splendid hospitality?"

The cheek of the Princess blenched, and her voice slightly trembled as she said hurriedly: "M. d'Ancre was on duty, Madam, about the person of your Majesty, and I did not presume to ask his absence from the palace."

"*Veramente, principessa,*" exclaimed Marie de Medicis with sudden vehemence; "you excel yourself to-day! But have a care! My faithful servants were no meet guests, as it would seem, at a festival in honour of the house of Guise. Truly your energetic kinsmen are goodly diplomatists. Not content with conspiring in the Louvre—under the very roof which shelters their sovereign—they conspire also in their own palaces, by the glare of tapers as busily as in the shade. Even to the measure of soft music they can adapt their treasonable practices; and amid the murmurs of flattery can breathe the whispers of disaffection as glibly as when closeted together secure from all intrusion. So be it then; exclude from your glittering saloons all those who are the known adherents of the sovereign and his mother; they will be careful for the

future to repay the courtesy in kind. I have as great a dread of spies as yourself, Madame de Conti; and henceforward, I will profit by the lesson which you have taught me."

"I can assure your Majesty—" faltered the lady of honour.

"Nay, Princess;" interposed the Queen-mother bitterly; "do not wrong yourself. Have at least the courage necessary to the personage which you have seen fit to enact; and believe me that you will need it when you venture to cope with a Medicis. Florence can also boast of her diplomatists, and they may chance to prove even more subtle than those of our good city of Paris. There is a stern and a profitable lesson in the past should you read it aright."

So saying Marie de Medicis rose from her seat, and with a stately step walked to a window overlooking the river, where she remained for a considerable time apparently absorbed by the busy scene beneath her; but at length she turned slowly towards the three ladies, who had also risen, and said calmly: "His Majesty is about to visit me. Mesdames du Fargis and de Fervaques will assist me to receive him. I excuse Madame de Conti; after the manifold exertions of the past night she must need repose."

The Princess made the three low curtsies customary on such occasions, and disappeared behind the tapestried hangings which were held back by the usher on duty; while the Queen-mother threw herself once more upon

her seat, and burying her face in her hand, again fell into a deep and bitter reverie.

Meanwhile the Protestants were preparing for the general assembly, and the Maréchal de Bouillon proceeded to Sedan, in order to assist at their deliberations. He had no sooner done this than the Prince de Condé requested permission to go and take possession of his government of Guienne, a project which at that particular moment created universal suspicion, and excited the alarm of Marie, who was apprehensive that he was about to solicit the support of the reformed party. Under this impression she exerted all her ingenuity to invent pretexts for delaying his purpose without awakening his distrust; but they ultimately proved unavailing, and she found herself compelled to allow him to depart.

At this particular juncture the Duke d'Epernon, irritated by the persevering avoidance of M. de Soissons, and the covert sarcasms of Concini, resolved in his turn to absent himself, and to proceed to his estate at Angoulême; flattering himself that the Regent would be but too happy to recal him when she discovered how great a blank his departure must cause at court. It is moreover, probable, that he anticipated the same gratifying impediments which had delayed the journey of the Prince de Condé; and consequently his disappointment was extreme as he perceived the pleasure which Marie could not conceal when he mentioned his wish to

retire for a brief interval from the capital. The wound thus inflicted upon his vanity was, however, soon healed; when, with a renewal of all her former confidence and condescension, she confessed to him that no proposition could have been more agreeable to her at that moment, from her anxiety to secure the services of a friend upon whom she could rely, to keep a zealous watch over the movements of the Prince de Condé, whose departure had awakened her fears. She then explained the suspicions she had formed, and gave M. d'Epernon full and ample instructions for his future guidance, accompanying them with assurances of her firm reliance upon his attachment and fidelity; thus enabling the crest-fallen courtier, who must otherwise have withdrawn in partial disgrace, to leave the palace with every mark of favour and distinction.*

The precaution thus taken with regard to M. de Condé, proved, however, supererogatory, the Prince having no further object in view in absenting himself from the capital than the gratification of that love of personal splendour and amusement in which he had always indulged whenever an opportunity presented itself; and thus while the Duke d'Epernon was watching all his movements with eager and anxious suspicion, M. de Condé was simply enacting the *quasi*-sovereign at Bordeaux and the adjacent cities, where he was

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, p. 136.

received with great ceremony, harangued by the municipal bodies, and surrounded by a petty court composed of all the nobles of the province.*

Concini had watched the departure of the exulting Duke d'Epernon with a delight as great as his own; the only rival who threatened to counterbalance his influence was now removed from the immediate sphere in which he could prove obnoxious to his fortunes, and he soon felt the effect of his absence in the increased dependence of the Regent upon himself and his wife. Nor was the result less obvious to all the members of the court, who, as their several interests prompted, were either overjoyed or dismayed at the unconcealed supremacy of the vain-glorious marquis, whose bearing became more arrogant than ever, and who appeared at each moment ready to dispute precedency even with the princes of the blood themselves. All bowed before him. He was the only certain channel of favour and preferment; and whenever, as frequently occurred, some act of presumption more glaring than usual, aroused against him the ire of the great nobles, the tears and entreaties of his wife always sufficed to induce the Regent to make new sacrifices in order to insure his impunity.

This imprudence on the part of Marie, although originating, as it obviously did, in an inclination to maintain that peace at court of which she had now

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 58.

learned by bitter experience to appreciate all the value increased the evil which it was intended to obviate, the Italian only seeing in her indulgence a new motive for continuing his moral aggressions; and thus the evil increased slowly but surely, and the hatred engendered by the preposterous pretensions of the marquis acquired new force, even when all around him appeared to admit his supremacy, and to bend before his will.

One of the most striking proofs of the power to which he had at this period attained is afforded by the fact that a nobleman, known as a firm adherent of M. de Soissons, while conversing with the Marquis de Cœuvres on the subject of the increasing feud between the princes of the blood, suggested that he could perceive no more certain method for the count to maintain himself in favour at court than that he should effect the marriage of one of his daughters with the son of the Italian favourite. This project startled the marquis, who never for an instant suspected that the proposition could have originated with M. de Soissons himself; and whose proud ancestral blood boiled within him at the idea of so close an alliance between one of the first subjects of France and an adventurer of obscure birth, whose very claim to respectability was even yet disputed. He was, however, fated to feel even greater surprise when, a short time subsequently, as both parties were conversing with the marquis in the Queen's gallery at Fontainebleau, he heard a third person openly, and without the slightest

hesitation, enter upon the subject with Concini himself; who, with evident gratification but affected humilty, immediately replied that such an alliance was an honour to which he could not pretend; but that were it ever to be seriously proposed to him, he could only reply in the words of the Cardinal Farnese to an individual who suggested to him an arrangement which at once flattered his self-love, and appeared impossible of completion; "*Tu m'aduli, ma tu mi piaci.*" The subject was not pursued, but it was one not readily to be forgotten by those who were aware that it had been mooted; and there can be little doubt that the self-appreciation of the Marquis d'Ancre gained fresh force, even from a passing allusion to the possibility of such an event.

Encouraged, as it would appear, by the brilliant prospect thus opened up for his son, Concini soon began to think no aggrandisement beyond the power of his ambition; and readily overlooking both personal hatred and political good-faith in the pursuance of his darling passion, it was not long ere he argued that since a prince of the blood had seen fit to solicit an alliance with himself, he might readily infer that a noble of inferior rank could not but esteem it as an honour; and accordingly he commenced a negociation with the Duke d'Epernon, between whose second son, the Marquis de la Valette, and his own daughter he desired to effect a marriage. This proposal was, however, resented as an insult by the duke,

who was not sparing in his comments upon the insolence of the Italian adventurer; and so unmeasured were his expressions that his ruin must have been ensured from that moment, had not a circumstance shortly afterwards occurred which rendered his services necessary to the Regent.

Before the end of April the Duke de Bouillon returned from Sedan, and manifested an earnest inclination to devote himself, in as far as his honour and religious principles would permit him to do so, to the interests of the Regent during the approaching assembly at Saumur; adding, moreover, that should the Queen deem his absence from the meeting desirable, he would remain at court until it had terminated. So unexpected a concession highly gratified Marie, who with many acknowledgments for his devotion to her cause, referred him to M. de Villeroy, by whom, his proposal having been demurely considered, it was declined; the minister being aware that the influence of M. de Bouillon would be alone able to counteract that of Sully, who, having left the court disappointed and dissatisfied, would not fail to profit by so favourable an opportunity of asserting his power over his co-religionists. He, moreover, while thanking the Prince for a proof of loyalty so welcome to the government, and so important to the sovereign, hinted that should he succeed in weakening the power of Sully, and in inducing the assembly to consent to such terms as could prudently be conceded, he would

confer upon him the government of Poitou, of which it had been decided to deprive the ex-finance-minister.*

This new impulse added fresh energy to the sudden loyalty of M. de Bouillon, who at once proceeded to Saumur in order to secure his election as president of the assembly, a distinction which he declared to be due to his long services. The Protestant deputies were, however, by no means inclined to admit his claim, and more than suspicious of his intentions; and they consequently, despite his undisguised annoyance, selected for that dignity M. du Plessis-Mornay the governor of the city; a circumstance which did not fail to increase the hatred felt by the maréchal towards Sully, to whom he immediately attributed the mortification. Soon made conscious by the coldness with which his invectives and threats were received by the principal Huguenot nobles, that he was only injuring, by his unseemly violence, the cause he sought to serve, M. de Bouillon nevertheless resolved to restrain himself, and to endeavour to effect a good understanding with Sully, whose personal importance on this occasion was powerfully increased by the influence of his son-in-law the Duke de Rohan. The assembly met for the first time in May, and continued its sittings until September, at which period their demands and grievances were dispatched to the court, the dismissal of Sully being indicated as one of the latter.

* Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 22.

This fact alarmed the council; who moreover could not contemplate without great apprehension the union and perfect understanding which had, throughout the whole proceeding, characterised the Protestant leaders, who had taken their usual oath to uphold each other and the faith which they professed; and who were, as the ministers well knew, able to redeem their pledge so effectively should they see fit to exert their power, that any demonstration on their part could not fail to convulse the nation from one extremity to the other. After considerable deliberation it was agreed that the only method by which the impending evil could be averted was to dissolve the assembly, before it could proceed from words to acts; and accordingly a pretext for this breach of faith was at once found in the declaration that the King had permitted the assembling of the reformed party to enable them to select six individuals, from among whom he might himself nominate two as general deputies; while at the same time the documents forwarded to the court were returned, with an emphatic refusal to make any reply to their contents until such time as the required nomination had been made. All opposition, save what must have assumed a decidedly hostile character, was of course impossible on the part of the Protestants; whose indignation, loud as it naturally became for a time, was finally silenced, even if not extinguished, by the calm and dignified eloquence of the Count du Plessis-Mornay, who reminded the assembly that their

first duty as Christians was obedience to the ruling powers.

"Let us separate;" said this prudent and right-minded man, as exclamations of anger and violence resounded on all sides. "Let each, on leaving this spot, leave also all animosity behind him. We should only heighten the evil by spreading it through the provinces. Each has failed, yet each has done well. Let us now endeavour to obtain by respectful silence and Christian patience what has been refused to our remonstrances and requests."*

A short time subsequently, the death of M. de Créquy, governor of the town and citadel of Amiens, having taken place, a great number of the nobles were ambitious to succeed to the vacant dignity, among whom was the Marquis d'Ancre, whose insatiable ambition grasped at every opportunity of acquiring honour and advancement. Having confided his wish upon this subject to M. de Soissons, he was encouraged in his pretensions by that Prince; and having obtained the royal permission to absent himself for a time from the court, he hastened to Picardy, attended by a hundred horsemen, in order to negociate the affair with the entire sanction of the Queen; where, although opposed by the ministers who were anxious to curb his daily-increasing power, he ultimately succeeded in his attempt.

Nevertheless the difficulties raised by the council,

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 22, 23. Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 72—79.

not only to his acquirement of the government, but also to the marriage of his son with the daughter of M. de Soissons, which had been communicated to them by the Marquis de Rambouillet,* embittered his temper, and determined him to discover some means of revenging what he considered as an undue interference with his personal affairs. An extraordinary imprudence of which he was soon afterwards guilty, rendered him, however, for a time unable to indulge his vindictiveness, and even threatened to involve him in the disgrace which he was so anxious to see visited upon his adversaries. In the first place, intoxicated by his newly-acquired dignities, he affected the utmost attachment for M. de Soissons, who had exerted all his influence in his behalf; and remarked that the proposition lately made to him by the Prince for an alliance between their families, was no longer so unequal as it had then appeared, although he was still aware that it would be a great honour conferred upon himself; but that as the Duke de Longueville was about to marry another daughter of the Prince, and that their governments were contiguous, the union of his own son with

* Nicolas d'Angennes, Marquis de Rambouillet, and Vidame de Mans, was captain of the body-guard to Charles IX., and subsequently, under Henry III., knight of all the royal Orders, and ambassador to Germany and Rome. M. de Thou asserts that to high birth M. de Rambouillet united superior merit; and that, combined with an unusual taste for literature, he possessed an extraordinary knowledge of public business.

the sister of the bride might prove a mutual advantage, and of considerable service to M. de Soissons himself. This unseemly boast he followed up by a still more flagrant proof of presumption; for, being anxious to assert his entire authority over the citadel of Amiens, he entered into a financial treaty with M. de Rouillac the lieutenant, and M. de Fleury the ensign of the fortress, and replaced them by adherents of his own, without the sanction of the Regent; after which he borrowed, on his own responsibility, twelve thousand livres from the receiver-general of the province for the payment of his garrison.

Such an unprecedented disregard of the royal prerogative had never before occurred in France; and it no sooner became known to the ministers, than they hastened to represent it in its most heinous colours to the Queen; impressing upon her in no measured terms the danger of such a precedent, which could not fail to bring contempt upon her authority, and to introduce disorder into the finances of the nation; and entreating her to remember that should she sanction an alliance between the imprudent favourite and a prince of the blood, she could no longer hope to restrain his extravagances. Marie de Medicis was jealous of her dignity, and moreover fully conscious of the fault which had been committed by Concini, and her anger was consequently unbounded. In the first burst of her indignation she refused to see Madame d'Ancre, whom she accused of having incited her husband to these

demonstrations of disrespect towards herself; and her wrath was skilfully increased by the Princess de Conti, who looked upon the favour of the low-born Leonora with impatience and disgust, and could not desire a more ready means of ensuring her discredit than that of following up the arguments of the ministers; of dwelling upon the little respect which had been shown to the person and privileges of her royal mistress; and of expatiating upon the ruinous effect of so pernicious an example upon the discontended nobility.

The effect of these frequent and confidential conversations may be imagined; the mind of the Queen became more and more excited against her former favourites, while she clung with the tenacity of helplessness to Madame de Conti, through whose medium the princes began to hope that they should at length triumph over the detested Italian; but the sun of Concini was not destined to set so soon; and although he had fierce enemies, he still possessed zealous friends; the more zealous, perhaps, because they had accurately read the character of the Tuscan princess, and were well aware that she had so long leant upon others that she had at last become incapable of perfect self-reliance. Through the medium of those friends, but undoubtedly still more from the daily and hourly *ennui* experienced by Marie herself while thus deprived of the society of her foster-sister, the pardon of Concini was finally obtained. He was declared to have erred through ignorance; and a perfect reconciliation took place which

overthrew all the half-pledged projects of the disappointed courtiers.

Two circumstances alone tended to mitigate the satisfaction of the Marquis d'Ancre. The representations of the ministers had succeeded in so thoroughly awakening the apprehensions of the Regent, that she had, at their first interview, strictly forbidden him thenceforward to attempt the accomplishment of his anticipated alliance with the house of Bourbon; while he had found himself compelled to apologise to the Count de Soissons for the excesses in which he had indulged in Picardy, and which had drawn down upon the Prince the resentment, not only of the Queen herself, but of the whole council, by whom he was accused of having upheld the pretensions of the Italian in order to aggrandise his own daughter.

In the month of July Marie de Medicis bestowed great happiness upon the whole nation by remitting the arrears of taxes which had remained unpaid from the year 1597, until that of 1603; while she also, at the same period, decreed the abolition of the gaming academies to which allusion was made in the preceding volume; and, finally, ascertaining that the edict against duelling, issued by the late King, had been evaded, by certain sophistical observances, she published a declaration, setting forth that all hostile meetings, however arranged, would not only entail the penalties already denounced against them, but henceforward be regarded as acts of assassination. This wholesome and well-timed declaration was verified by the Parliament on the 11th

of July; and great hopes were entertained that so stringent a measure would effectually terminate an abuse which during the reign of the late King had deprived France of several thousand of its best chivalry.*

Throughout the autumn, notwithstanding the gravity of the affairs then pending, the court at Fontainebleau was one ceaseless scene of dissipation. High play still formed a prominent feature in the amusements of the palace; and the extent to which it was carried, may be estimated by the fact that Concini, before his return to the capital, had lost at cards and dice, the enormous sum of twenty-six thousand pistoles;† and while the *bransle* and the gaming-table occupied the night, the day was devoted to hunting, a diversion in which the Queen constantly participated, accompanied by the princesses and ladies of the court, and attended by a suite of between four and five hundred of the principal nobles. The arrival of the Duchess of Lorraine and the Cardinal de Gonzaga‡ gave a new impetus to the gaiety of the royal circle, while their sumptuous reception at the palace induced new outlay and new rivalry among the courtiers.§

It was in the midst of this splendid dissipation

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 152, 153.

† L'Etoile, vol. iv, p. 223.

‡ Louis, Cardinal de Gonzaga, was the last member of the Novellare branch of the illustrious Italian house of Gonzaga, Dukes of Mantua, and was canonized in 1621, under the title of St. Louis de Gonzaga.

§ Bassompierre, Mém., p. 78.

that the Regent received tidings of the death of the Duke de Mayenne; a loss, which from the good understanding recently established between herself and that Prince, was of serious importance to her authority; while the event produced a still more painful impression from the fact that his wife, Henrietta of Savoy, had died of grief a few days subsequently, and that they had been carried to the grave together.

The next news which reached the court was that of the demise of Marguerite of Austria, Queen of Spain; an event which from the recent treaty concluded between the two countries, had become doubly interesting to France. This Princess, who was the daughter of Charles, Archduke of Gratz, Duke of Styria and Carinthia, and of Marie of Bavaria, had become the wife of Philip III. in November, 1599; and had left four sons, viz., Philip, Charles, Ferdinand, and Alphonso; and two daughters, Anne and Marguerite, the former of whom was promised to Louis XIII.

Other and more personal interests sufficed, nevertheless to dry the tears of the Queen-mother, as at this period the Duchess of Lorraine explained the purport of her visit; which, it is asserted, was to induce her royal niece to redeem the pledge given by her deceased husband that the Dauphin should espouse the Princess of Lorraine, who would bring as her dowry to the young King the duchies of Lorraine and Bar. Marie was, however, too deeply compromised with Spain as well as with the Pope and the Grand-Duke of Tuscany, both of

whom, were earnest to effect the completion of that alliance, to follow up a policy which could not but have proved much more beneficial to the French nation; while the Count de Fuentes, who immediately suspected the purpose of Madame de Lorraine, loudly and arrogantly asserted that the French king could not have two wives; that his marriage with the Infanta was concluded; and that his sovereign was not to be cheated with impunity.*

Oppressed by this double weight of regret and anxiety, Marie and her court returned to the Louvre; but her grief was still fated to be fearfully increased, for she had scarcely established herself in the palace, when her maternal terrors were suddenly awakened by intelligence of the dangerous illness of her second son the Duke d'Orleans, upon which she hastened to St. Germain. The fiat had, however, gone forth; and two days subsequently the little Prince, upon whose precocious intellect and sweetness of disposition so many hopes had been built up, was a corpse in his mother's arms; and within a few hours Madame de Lorraine and her brother had taken leave of their illustrious relative, while the court of the Louvre, so lately giddy with gaiety, was once more draped in sables.†

Devotedly attached to her children, the Queen was for a time inconsolable; her greatness was embittered by private suffering, and her authority was endangered by

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. ii, pp. 577—586.

† Bassompierre, Mém., p. 78.

intestine broils; she looked around her, and scarcely knew upon whom to depend, or upon what to lean. The constant exactions of the princes convinced her of the utter hopelessness of satisfying their venality, and securing their allegiance, save by sacrifices which gradually tended to diminish her own power, and to compromise the interests of the crown; while the people murmured at the burthens inflicted upon them in order to gratify the exactions of the nobility.

To increase her anxiety, the death of her second son was destined to add to the number of malcontents by whom the Queen was surrounded, all the principal officers of his household advancing their claim to be transferred to that of the infant Duke d'Anjou; who, on the demise of the Duke d'Orleans, assumed the title of Monsieur, as only brother of the King. It was, however, impossible to place all these candidates about the person of the young Prince; and it was ultimately decided that M. de Brèves,* a relative of M. de Villeroy, to whom the appointment had already been promised by Henry IV., should be selected as the

* François Savary, Seigneur de Brèves, had served as ambassador both at Constantinople and Rome, and was a man of great erudition. Well versed in history, an able diplomatist, and possessed of considerable antiquarian lore, he had travelled in Greece, Asia Minor, and the Holy Land. His pupil, at the period of his appointment, being still a mere infant, he did not enter upon his official functions until 1615, when the young Prince was placed under his care, on the departure of the court for Bordeaux, to celebrate the marriage of Louis XIII. with Anne of Austria.

preceptor of Monsieur, to the exclusion of M. de Béthune, who had held the same post about the Duke d'Orleans, and who consequently demanded to be transferred to the service of his brother. But the relative of Sully was little likely to prove a successful candidate; he had owed his previous appointment to the influence of the powerful kinsman whose counsels swayed the actions of a great monarch; that monarch was now in his grave, and that kinsman in honourable exile; and his claim was no longer admitted. The Marquis de Cœuvres, who had been master of the wardrobe to the deceased Prince, was fated to be equally disappointed. The ministers had not forgotten that he had been an active agent in the proposed alliance between the Count de Soissons and Concini, and they did not fail to impress upon the Queen the extreme danger of placing an individual of so resolute and enterprising a character about the person of the heir presumptive. As he could obtain no decided reply to his application, M. de Cœuvres solicited the assistance of the Marquis d'Ancre, who met his request with civil professions of regard, but declined to oppose the will of the ministers; an exhibition of ingratitude which so enraged the applicant that he forthwith declined all further interference in the affairs, or claim upon the friendship of the tergiversating Italian, and attached himself exclusively to the interests of M. de Soissons.*

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 163, 164. D'Estrées, Mém., p. 392.

This Prince was also destined, at this particular period, to augment the difficulties of the Regent. The duchy of Alençon had been mortgaged by the French crown to the Duke of Wurtemberg; and hopes had, some months previously, been held out to the Prince, that should he ever be in a position to redeem the debt, he might avail himself of the opportunity, and become its possessor. This time had now come; the Princess his wife had recovered from the Duke of Savoy a large amount for her estates in Piedmont, which he resolved to devote to the acquisition of the coveted duchy, and he accordingly applied for the sanction of the King, without whose consent the transfer could not be legally executed.

It is probable that, having already received a partial consent to his wishes, M. de Soissons was far from apprehending any serious impediment to their realisation; but the jealousy of Marie had been aroused, and she did not fail to perceive that such a concession must be dangerous to the interests of the younger children of France. The Prince had therefore no sooner made his request than she assumed an attitude of offended dignity and cold rebuke; and while he awaited her reply with a smile of anticipatory success, she said drily: "Do you wish, Monsieur, to acquire a duchy which has constantly been set apart as the appanage of one of the sons of the sovereign? I begin to perceive that your designs are somewhat lofty."

Thus repulsed, M. de Soissons withdrew, but with a

demeanour which convinced the Regent that she had made a new enemy, whom she must consequently prepare herself to resist; a conclusion at which she had no sooner arrived than she summoned the Prince de Condé and the Duke d'Epernon to her assistance.*

This measure was not, however, destined to prove entirely successful. The Marquis de Cœuvres, who at once felt that M. de Soissons was in no position to maintain single-handed any effectual opposition to the host of adversaries about to be marshalled against him, lost not a moment in seeking to convince him that he had but one prospect of avoiding the disgrace by which he was threatened. The impetuous count poured forth all his wrath in invectives, and declared his readiness to endure any mortification rather than not enforce what he persisted in designating as his legitimate claims as a prince of the blood; but his zealous adviser was not to be thus silenced.

"Remember, Sir;" was the rejoinder of the marquis; "that you are now embroiled with both the Regent and her ministers; that the momentary truce between yourself and Concini is merely lip-deep, and may be broken by a breath; that you are the open and declared enemy of the Guises and the Duke d'Epernon; and that each and all of these are interested in your ruin. I do not attempt to deny that your quality as a prince of the blood must, as a natural consequence, avail you

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 88, 89.

much; and it is this very conviction that encourages me to persist in counselling you to place no reliance upon minor friendships, but at once to ally yourself closely with your nephew the Prince de Condé, and thus strengthen the very rights upon which you presume. During a minority the princes of the blood have an influence in France, which once earnestly and truthfully united and exerted, must eventually prove irresistible."

After some further difficulty M. de Soissons suffered himself to be convinced by the arguments of the marquis; and it was ultimately resolved that overtures should be made to this effect on the part of the count, through the medium of M. de Beaumont, the son of the President de Harlay, who was at that period expected in the capital, and who was in the confidence of the Prince de Condé. Beaumont had accordingly no sooner arrived than the Marquis de Cœuvres made him acquainted with the desire of the count, and it was finally agreed that, upon the pretext of a hunt, the two princes should meet at the residence of the former. As, however, it was immediately ascertained that the Regent had expressed some suspicions of this interview, and declared the reconciliation which had taken place to be too sudden not to involve some occult purpose, M: de Soissons deemed it expedient to silence her fears by inviting Concini to join the party.

The invitation was accepted; the hunt took place, and was succeeded by high-play; after which the different

personages apparently separated for the night; but within half an hour the two royal kinsmen and their confidential friends were closeted together; and before dawn an alliance offensive and defensive was concluded between the princes, who each pledged himself to receive no favour or benefit from the government to the exclusion or loss of the other; and that, moreover, in the event of the disgrace or disgust of either, the other should withdraw from the court at the same time, whither neither was to be at liberty to return alone; and this compact which, as will immediately be seen, could not fail to prove dangerous to the interests of Marie, was religiously observed until the death of M. de Soissons.*

The credit of the ministers was greatly increased by this new cabal, as the Regent instantly perceived the necessity of opposing their authority to the probable pretensions of the princes, neither of whom attempted to disguise their discontent at the insignificant position to which they had been reduced at court. To Jeannin, in particular, the Queen expressed in unmeasured terms the confidence which she placed in his zeal and loyalty; she called him her *friend*, her *arm*, and her *head;* and assured him that she would be guided entirely by his counsels.

Anxious to respond to these flattering demonstrations, and to justify the trust reposed in them, the ministers resolved, in order still further to protect the

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 89, 90. Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 157, 158.

crown against any aggression on the part of the princes, to recal the Maréchal de Lesdiguières to court; who was easily induced to resign his command of the army in Champagne by the prospect which they held out to him, of causing the verification of the ducal patent which he had obtained from Henry IV. In this promise they, however, subsequently failed; and the disappointment so irritated the maréchal that he resolved to revenge himself by joining the party of the princes, and otherwise harassing the council; a determination which was unfortunately too easily realised at a period of such internal convulsion.*

The last event worthy of record which took place in the present year was the purchase towards the close of September of the Hôtel de Luxembourg by the Queen-Regent, for the sum of thirty thousand crowns, in order to erect upon its site the celebrated Palace d'Orleans, now once more known by its original name of the Luxembourg. The construction of this splendid edifice was intrusted to Jacques de Brosse,† who immediately commenced removing the ruins of the

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 160, 161. D'Estrées, Mém., p. 393.

† Jacques de Brosse was the most renowned architect of his day, and left behind him more than one work calculated to justify his celebrity. In addition to the Luxembourg palace, which was built entirely according to his designs, he erected the magnificent portico of St. Gervais, the aqueduct of Arceuil, and the famous Protestant church of Charenton, destroyed in 1685.

delapidated hôtel which encumbered the space destined for the new elevation; and four years subsequently the first stone was laid of the regal pile which transmitted his own name to posterity, linked with those of Marie de Medicis and Peter Paul Rubens.*

* Curiositéz de Paris, édit. Sangrain, Paris 1742, vol. ii, p. 37.

CHAPTER IV.

[1612.]

THE PRINCES OF THE BLOOD RETIRE FROM THE COURT — INCREASED INFLUENCE OF THE DUKES OF GUISE AND EPERNON—JEALOUSY OF CONCINI—THE MINISTERS DESIRE THE RECAL OF THE PRINCES—THE LENT BALLETS—THE GOVERNMENT OF QUILLEBŒUF IS OFFERED TO THE COUNT DE SOISSONS—THE PRINCES ARE INVITED TO RETURN TO THE CAPITAL — ARRIVAL OF THE PRINCES — M. DE SOISSONS ABANDONS CONCINI — AN ATTEMPT IS MADE TO CREATE DISSENSION BETWEEN M. DE SOISSONS AND THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ—THEY AGAIN WITHDRAW FROM PARIS — THE REGENT RESOLVES TO ANNOUNCE PUBLICLY THE APPROACHING MARRIAGE OF THE KING—DISAFFECTION OF THE PRINCES —FRANKNESS OF THE DUKE DE GUISE — THE DUKE D'EPERNON IS RECALLED—THE DUKE DE BOUILLON IS DISPATCHED TO ENGLAND— THE COUNCIL DISCUSS THE ALLIANCE WITH SPAIN — THE PRINCES RETURN TO THE CAPITAL—UNDIGNIFIED DEPORTMENT OF THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ — INSOLENCE OF M. DE SOISSONS — INDIGNATION OF THE REGENT — THE YOUNG DUKE DE MAYENNE IS APPOINTED EXTRAORDINARY AMBASSADOR TO SPAIN—AN UNPLEASANT TRUTH—ARROGANCE OF THE SPANISH KING—CONCESSION OF THE REGENT—DEATH OF THE DUKE OF MANTUA—THE CHANCELLOR DECLARES THE KING'S MARRIAGE —AN AMBASSADOR AND A "QUASI"-QUEEN—DISAPPOINTMENT OF THE PRINCES — THEY AGAIN WITHDRAW — CAUTION OF THE DUKE DE MONTMORENCY TO THE REGENT—SHE DISREGARDS THE WARNING— LOVE OF MARIE DE MEDICIS FOR MAGNIFICENCE AND DISPLAY — COURTLY ENTERTAINMENTS—THE CIRCLE OF MADAME—THE MARQUISE D'ANCRE — A CAROUSAL — SPLENDID FESTIVITIES — ARRIVAL OF THE SPANISH ENVOYS—THE CHEVALIER DE GUISE—ALARM OF CONCINI— THE QUEEN AND HER FOSTER-SISTER—CONCINI RESOLVES TO ESPOUSE THE PARTY OF THE PRINCES—THE DUKE DE BOUILLON ENDEAVOURS TO INJURE THE DUKE DE ROHAN IN THE ESTIMATION OF JAMES I.— REPLY OF THE ENGLISH MONARCH—BOUILLON RETURNS TO PARIS—

THE MARÉCHAL DE LESDIGUIÈRES RETIRES FROM THE COURT—THE DUKE DE VENDÔME SOLICITS THE ROYAL PERMISSION TO PRESIDE THE STATES OF BRITTANY—IS REFUSED BY THE REGENT—CHALLENGES HIS SUBSTITUTE — AND IS EXILED TO ANET — CONCINI AUGMENTS THE DISAFFECTION OF THE PRINCES—THE DUKE OF SAVOY JOINS THE CABAL —LESDIGUIÈRES PREPARES TO MARCH A BODY OF TROOPS AGAINST THE CAPITAL—CONCINI DETERS THE REGENT FROM GIVING THE GOVERNMENT OF QUILLEBŒUF TO THE COUNT DE SOISSONS—INDIGNATION OF THE DUKE DE GUISE—HE REVEALS THE TREACHERY OF CONCINI TO THE PRINCES—ALL THE GREAT NOBLES JOIN THE FACTION OF M. DE CONDÉ WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE DUKE D'EPERNON — THE DUKE DE BELLEGARDE IS ACCUSED OF SORCERY—QUARREL BETWEEN THE COUNT DE SOISSONS AND THE MARÉCHAL DE FERVAQUES—MARIE DE MEDICIS RESOLVES TO PERSECUTE THE PROTESTANTS—BOUILLON ENDEAVOURS TO EFFECT THE DISGRACE OF THE DUKE DE ROHAN—THE REGENT REFUSES TO LISTEN TO HIS JUSTIFICATION—HE TAKES POSSESSION OF ST. JEAN-D'ANGÉLY—ANGER OF THE QUEEN—CONFLICTING MANIFESTOES —M. DE ROHAN PREPARES TO RESIST THE ROYAL TROOPS—THE MINISTERS ADVISE A NEGOCIATION, WHICH PROVES SUCCESSFUL—DEPARTURE OF THE DUKE DE MAYENNE FOR MADRID—ARRIVAL OF THE DUKE OF PASTRANO—HIS BRILLIANT RECEPTION IN FRANCE—HIS MAGNIFICENT RETINUE—HIS FIRST AUDIENCE OF LOUIS XIII.—THE CARDINALS—PUERILITY OF THE PRINCES—RECEPTION OF THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR BY MADAME—THE YEAR OF MAGNIFICENCE—SPLENDOUR OF THE COURT OF SPAIN—SIGNATURE OF THE MARRIAGE ARTICLES—HONOURS SHOWN TO M. DE MAYENNE AT MADRID—THE SPANISH PRINCESS AND HER DUENNA — THE DUKE OF SAVOY DEMANDS THE HAND OF MADAME CHRISTINE FOR HIS SON—MARIE DESIRES TO UNITE HER TO THE PRINCE OF WALES—DEATH OF PRINCE HENRY OF ENGLAND—DEATH OF THE COUNT DE SOISSONS—THE PRINCE DE CONTI CLAIMS THE GOVERNMENT OF DAUPHINY — THE COUNT D'AUVERGNE IS RELEASED FROM THE BASTILLE, AND RESIGNS HIS GOVERNMENT OF AUVERGNE TO M. DE CONTI — THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ ORGANISES A NEW FACTION — THE REGENT ESPOUSES HIS VIEWS—ALARM OF THE GUISES—RECAL OF THE DUKE DE BELLEGARDE—HE REFUSES TO APPEAR AT COURT—THE BARON DE LUZ IS RESTORED TO FAVOUR—THE GUISES PREPARE TO REVENGE HIS DEFALCATION FROM THEIR CAUSE.

CHAPTER IV.

[1612.]

THE Prince de Condé and the Count de Soissons having withdrawn from the capital, MM. de Guise and d'Epernon found themselves once more the principal personages of the court; but their triumph was nevertheless greatly moderated by the jealousy of Concini, who began to apprehend that their ceaseless efforts to gratify the wishes of the Queen, and to flatter her love of splendour and dissipation, might ultimately tend to weaken his own influence; while the ministers, on their side, aware that the negociations then pending with Spain for the marriage of the King could not be readily concluded without their aid and concurrence, however they might deprecate their return from other causes, also felt the necessity of securing their co-operation; for which purpose it was essential that such measures should be adopted as might render this concession acceptable to the royal malcontents.*

* D'Estrées, Mém., p. 394.

While this subject was under consideration, and Lent rapidly approaching, the Queen, who being still in slight mourning, could not, according to the established etiquette, hold any assemblies in her own apartments, but who was unwilling to forego the customary amusements of the carnival, desired the Duke de Guise, the Prince de Joinville, and M. de Bassompierre to perform a ballet every Sunday, which they accordingly did; "dividing," says the latter, "the expense between us."

The first of these allegorical dances was executed in the apartments of the Princess de Conti, where a supper was prepared for her Majesty with an exclusiveness uncommon at the time, and which created considerable disappointment in the court circle. None but the princes then resident in the capital, namely MM. de Guise, de Nevers, and de Reims, with a few chosen courtiers, were permitted to attend; while the number of ladies was equally limited.

The second took place in the apartments of the Duchess de Vendôme, upon which occasion the banquet was offered to the Queen by Madame de Mercœur; the third at the Hôtel de Guise, where the Regent was entertained in the private saloon of the duchess; and the fourth and last in the suite of rooms appropriated to Madame de Guercheville in the Louvre.*

"I took the liberty;" says Rambure, with his usual

* Bassompierre, Mém., p. 78.

quaintness; "of representing to the Regent that the people would murmur on witnessing balls at court while she was still in mourning; but she only laughed at me, and bade me dismiss such an idea from my thoughts; at which I was not at all pleased, from the respect that I entertained for the memory of his late Majesty."*

These gaieties did not, however, serve to divert the thoughts of the ministers from their desire to recal the absent princes of the blood; and it was finally arranged that as M. de Soissons had been the original cause of their absence, owing to his indignation at the ill-success of his attempt to purchase the duchy of Alençon, it would be expedient to hold out to him a prospect of obtaining the government of Quillebœuf. It was accordingly decided that the Marquis d'Ancre on the part of their Majesties, and M. de Villeroy on that of the ministers, should proceed to Nogent where the princes were then residing, and invite them to return to court, with a full assurance from all parties that they would there occupy the station befitting their exalted rank, and be received with the dignities and honours which were due to them as princes of the blood.

The mission of the two envoys proved successful; and on their arrival at Fontainebleau the uncle and

* Rambure, MS. Mém., vol. vi, p. 81.

nephew were welcomed with a warmth and magnificence which alike flattered their self-love, and tended to restore them to confidence. Nevertheless, however, M. de Soissons had no sooner discovered that the Marquis d'Ancre, who, when he had himself retired from the court had lost the favour of the Queen, was now the firm ally of the ministers, through whose good offices he had regained his former position, than he exhibited towards him a haughtiness and avoidance which ere long terminated in an open rupture.

Fearful of incurring through the means of the count the additional enmity of M. de Condé, Concini endeavoured to conciliate the Marquis de Cœuvres, and to effect through his interposition a reconciliation with the indignant Prince. To this solicitation M. de Cœuvres replied that in order to establish a good understanding between two persons whom he had already so strenuously sought to serve, he was willing and ready to forget his private wrongs; but when it was suggested to him that he should exert his influence to renew the proposed marriage without reference to the Queen-Regent, he declined to make any effort to induce M. de Soissons to adopt so onerous a course, alleging that he had already suffered sufficiently by his interference in a matter which had been productive of great annoyance and injury to the Prince; and that he would not again lend his assistance to the project until the Marquis d'Ancre and his wife pledged themselves to reconcile

M. de Soissons with the ministers, to restore him to the favour of the Regent, and to obtain her sanction to the proposed alliance.

The firmness of this refusal staggered Concini, who only recently reinstated in the good graces of the Queen, was for once apprehensive of the extent of his influence. He consequently confined his reply to a simple acknowledgment of the courtesy with which his proposal had been met by the marquis; and then endeavoured personally to regain the confidence of the Prince by assurances of the sincere inclination of the Queen to meet his wishes upon every point within her power. As a natural consequence M. de Soissons listened willingly to these flattering declarations, uttered as they were by an individual well known to be in the entire confidence of his royal mistress; but they soon became blended with the regrets of the marquis that his listener should have formed so close an alliance with his nephew as to have drawn down upon him the suspicion of the court; and plausibly as these regrets were expressed, M. de Soissons was soon enabled to discover that the wily Italian had been instructed to attempt their disunion.

A similar endeavour was made with the Prince de Condé, but both were ineffectual. The two royal kinsmen had become fully aware that mutual support was their only safeguard against the party opposed to them; and they had no sooner detected the symptoms of coldness which supervened upon the ill-success of their advisers, than they resolved once more to leave

the court; and accordingly having taken leave of their Majesties, and resisted the pressing solicitations poured fort i on all sides, they again retired; the Prince to Valery, and the Count to Dreux.

This renewed opposition to her wishes roused the spirit of the Regent. She saw, as she asserted, that there no longer remained a hope of restraining the haughtiness, or of satisfying the pretensions, of the great vassals of the crown; and she accordingly declared that in order to maintain her authority and to secure the throne of her son, she would not allow the absence of the two princes of the blood to delay the publication of the King's marriage. Immediate measures were consequently taken to conclude the necessary arrangements; and this was done with the less hesitation that the Maréchal de Lesdiguières, (who for some time after his arrival at court had continued to anticipate that the pledge given to him by the ministers would shortly be redeemed,) had induced both the one and the other to state that they would offer no opposition to the alliance which had been determined.*

But this concession, which they were destined subsequently to deplore, was all that could be extorted from the princes, who considered themselves aggrieved by the fact that so important a negociation should have been carried on without their participation, when special couriers had been dispatched to acquaint both the

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 175—177.

Cardinal de Joyeuse and the Duke d'Epernon of the pending treaty. The Count de Soissons, moreover, complained loudly and bitterly of the undue power of the ministers; and especially inveighed against the Chancellor Sillery, whom he unhesitatingly accused of extortion and avarice, of publicly making a trade of justice to the dishonour of the nation, and of ruining those who were compelled to solicit his protection. On this point alone he was in accord with Concini; and it was to this mutual hatred of the ministers that their partial good-understanding must be attributed. The reasons which induced the Maréchal de Lesdiguières to approve the alliance we have already stated: the ducal crown which he was so anxious to secure must have been irretrievably lost by any opposition on his part to the proposed alliance, and this vision was for ever before his eyes. The approbation of the Connétable de Montmorency, who had originally declared his objection to so close an union between the two countries, was purchased by a promise that the hand of one of the princesses of Mantua, niece to the Regent, should be conferred upon his son; and the brilliant promise of the one marriage caused him to overlook the probable perils of the other; while the Duke de Bouillon, although he occasionally declared in the council that he seriously apprehended the result of so intimate a connexion with Spain, never remonstrated with any energy against the measure, and was believed by those who knew him best, to have already made his condi-

tions with Philip. On the departure of the two princes, Marie urged the Duke de Guise to afford her his support, together with that of his house, which he did with a frankness worthy of record; concluding, however, with these emphatic words: "I have but one favour to request of you, Madam; and that is that after this important service, your Majesty will not abandon us, as you have already once done, to the resentment of the princes of the blood.*

The Duke d'Epernon, who had left the court, as elsewhere stated, if not in actual disgrace, at least mortified and disappointed, was now recalled; and as his failing was well known, he was received on his arrival at Fontainebleau with such extraordinary distinction that all his past grievances were at once forgotten. Sillery, Villeroy, and Concini overwhelmed him with respect and adulation; and his adherence to the party of the Regent was consequently purchased before the question had been mooted in his presence.

Meanwhile the English ambassador declaimed loudly against the contemplated alliance, which he declared to be unequivocally antagonistic to the interests of his sovereign; and his undisguised indignation so alarmed the council that it was immediately resolved to dispatch the Duke de Bouillon on an extraordinary embassy to the court of London, in order to appease the displeasure of James. The minister of the United Provinces was equally violent in his opposition, and exerted all his

* Siri, Mém. Rec., vol. ii, pp. 607—612.

energies to prevent the conclusion of a treaty which he regarded as fatal to the interests of the republic that he represented, but his expostulations were disregarded. An envoy was sent to the Hague, with assurances of amity to Prince Maurice and the States-General; and finally the Maréchal de Schomberg was instructed to visit the several Protestant princes of Germany, in order to dispel any distrust which they might feel at the probable results of an alliance so threatening to their interests.*

These important measures concluded, the double marriage was proposed to the council, where the Prince de Condé and the Count de Soissons, who had recently returned to the capital, occupied their appointed seats; and at the commencement of the proceedings, when the question of the projected alliance had been submitted to the assembly, M. de Condé demanded that each should deliver his opinion according to his rank. The chancellor then opened the subject by a warm panegyric on the prudent administration of the Queen-Regent, dwelling at great length upon the extraordinary benefit which must accrue to the French nation from the contemplated alliance with Spain; and he was followed by the Duke de Guise, who, with more brevity but equal force, maintained the same argument; "No deliberation;" concluded the duke; "can be required upon so advantageous a proposal. We have only to thank God that her Majesty has so happily accom-

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 127.

plished the noble purpose with which Heaven had inspired her." As he resumed his seat the Connétable de Montmorency and the Dukes de Nevers and d'Epernon warmly applauded his words; after which the Marshals of Bouillon and Lesdiguières declared their approval of the alliance, simply expressing a hope that proper precautions would be taken to prevent the treaty with Spain from proving prejudicial to the interests of France in her more ancient alliances with other foreign powers; and finally it became the turn of M. de Condé to declare his sentiments. The young Prince had, however, been so astonished by the fearless address of the Duke de Guise that he had entirely lost his self-possession, and merely said with great coldness: "Since the affair is decided, it was unnecessary to ask our advice."

The surprise was universal, as the general impression throughout the chamber had been that the two princes had determined to attend the council in order to oppose the projected marriages; a supposition which the words immediately afterwards addressed to M. de Condé by his uncle served to confirm. "You see, Sir;" said the count, turning towards him with an impatient gesture; "that we are treated here like valets."

The Regent, irritated by this remark, which was uttered so audibly as to be generally overheard, was about to make some bitter rejoinder, when Sillery, perceiving her intention, again possessed himself of the ear of the assembly; and it was ultimately con-

cluded that the double marriage should be proclaimed on the 25th of March; and that the young Duke de Mayenne,* should proceed to Spain as ambassador-extraordinary to demand the hand of the Infanta.

At the close of the council the general topic of discourse was the extraordinary part played by the two princes. It was well known that they were both strongly opposed to the measure which had just been carried, and their conduct was severally judged according to the particular feeling of those by whom it was discussed; some asserting that it was from a fear of the consequences of resistance, and others declaring that they indulged a hope of profiting largely by so unexpected a neutrality. The Duke de Montmorency was meanwhile furious at the contempt incurred by the unmanly bearing of his son-in-law, M. de Condé. "Sir," he said, as the Prince shortly afterwards approached him: "you neither know how to resist with courage, or to yield with prudence."†

An unforeseen difficulty, however, now presented itself. The Spanish cabinet no longer entertained the same apprehensions of the power of France that it had felt during the preceding year. The supremacy which it had so reluctantly recognised existed no longer, and the arrogance of Philip grew with this conviction; thus, where he had only a few months previously

* Henry de Lorraine, Duke d'Aiguillon, who had succeeded to the title of his late father.

† Siri, Mém. Rec., vol. ii, pp. 618—620.

condescended to solicit, he now prepared to impose conditions; and the renewed negociations were haughtily met by fresh proposals. Upon the pretext that the princesses of France brought with them no right of succession to the crown, he declared his disinclination to give the hand of the elder Infanta to the young King; upon which Marie de Medicis replied that she was willing to accept his younger daughter as the bride of Louis XIII., provided that he, in his turn, were prepared to receive the Princess Christine instead of Madame; as by this arrangement she should be enabled to fulfil the pledge given by the late King to the Duke of Savoy, that the eldest daughter of France should be united to the Prince of Piedmont.

This explicit declaration at once silenced Philip, who was by no means desirous that Charles Emmanuel, whom he was anxious to crush, should by so close an alliance with France, secure an ally through whose support he could not fail to protect himself against all aggression; and he accordingly signified with somewhat less arrogance than before that he was ready to ratify the original treaty, provided that Anne of Austria were permitted to renounce, both for herself and her children, all claim to the sovereignty of Spain.

This point having been conceded, immediate preparations were made for the proclamation of the royal marriages; but the ceremony was unavoidably delayed by the death of the Duke of Mantua, the brother-in-law of the Regent, and did not take place until

the 5th of the following month;* on which day it was solemnly declared by the chancellor, in the presence of the Prince de Conti, the peers and officers of the crown, and the Spanish ambassador, who gave his assent to the duplicate alliance in the name of the King his master, and from that period treated the little Princess with all the honours due to a Queen of Spain; never addressing her save on his bended knee, and observing many still more exaggerated ceremonies which excited at once surprise and amusement at the French court.

It will have been remarked that neither M. de Condé nor the Count de Soissons were present at the declaration; both having once more withdrawn from the capital with the determination of continuing absent until the majority of the King, in order to avoid signing the marriage contract.

"The Queen," said M. de Soissons, when one of his friends would have dissuaded him from so extreme a course; "is quite able to conclude without our assistance the negociation into which she has entered. God grant that we at least may be spared all participation in the slight offered to the memory of the late King, by refusing to falsify the pledge which he gave to the Duke of Savoy, whose house has so long been the firm ally of France."

Pity it is that this generous burst of high-mindedness

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 30, 31.

and loyalty will not bear analysis. Both the princes had discovered that the professions to which they had so complacently listened, and which had induced their recent return to court, had merely been intended to lure them thither at a period when their presence was more than ever essential to the interests of the regency; and while M. de Condé found his position in the government as undefined and unsatisfactory as ever, and that his vanity had been flattered at the expense of his interests, the count on his side saw the possession of Quillebœuf more remote than ever, and openly declared that they had both been duped.

This undisguised admission at once revealed the selfishness of the views with which the malcontent princes had lent themselves to the wishes of Marie and her ministers; and assuredly no worse policy could have been adopted than that by which they were again induced to exile themselves from their proper sphere of action. Too many interests were, however, served by their absence, for either counsellor or courtier to point out to the Queen the extreme danger of driving them to extremities; save in the instance of the constable, who, more and more chagrined by the pitiful and even precarious position occupied by his son-in-law, remonstrated earnestly with the Regent upon the peril of the course which she had been induced to pursue.

"Remember, Madam;" he said; "that the civil wars and wretchedness of which this nation has been the prey during the last few reigns, all owed their

origin to the fatal advice given to Catherine de Medicis, to disregard the legitimate claims of the princes of the blood; and those who would induce your Majesty to follow her example, are more bent upon the furtherance of their own fortunes, and the increase of their own power, than anxious for the welfare of the state. Should your Majesty, therefore, suffer yourself to be influenced by their counsels, I foresee nothing in the future but anarchy and confusion."

Unfortunately, however, the close alliance of the veteran duke with one of those very princes whose cause he thus warmly advocated, and his enmity towards the Guises, deprived his remonstrances of the force which they might otherwise have possessed; and Marie de Medicis consequently disregarded the warning, until after-events caused her to feel and acknowledge its value. Supported by the house of Guise and the Duke d'Epernon, assured of the good faith of the constable and the Marshals of Bouillon and Lesdiguières, as well as deeply incensed by the bearing of the two princes in the council; and moreover urged by her more immediate favourites to assert her dignity, and to display towards the malcontents a coldness and indifference as marked as that which they exhibited towards herself, she dismissed the subject from her thoughts as one of slight importance; and turned all her attention to the brilliant festivities by which the declaration of the royal marriages was to be celebrated.*

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. ii, pp. 640—642.

The besetting sin of Marie de Medicis was a love of magnificence and display; and one of her greatest errors a wilful disregard of the financial exigences which her profuse liberality had induced. Thus, the splendour of the preparations which were exciting the wonder and curiosity of all Paris, engrossed her so wholly that she had little time for dwelling on contingent evils. The departure of the princes had, moreover, relieved her from the annoyance of encountering discontented countenances and repulsive frowns; and as she saw herself surrounded only by beaming looks and complacent smiles, her spirits rose, and she began to believe that her long-indulged vision of undisputed supremacy was about to be realised.

It was a pleasant dream, and one in which the self-deceived Regent was eagerly encouraged by those around her. The saloons and galleries of the Louvre were crowded with animated and obsequious courtiers, and the apartments of Marie herself thronged by the greatest and proudest in the land; all of whom appeared, upon so joyous an occasion, to have laid aside their personal animosities, and to live only to obey her behests. Madame had also formed her separate court, in the midst of which she received, with the grace of a girl, and the premature dignity of a Queen, the elaborate homage of her future subjects; and meanwhile the young Louis, delighted by the partial emancipation from ceremony and etiquette for which he was indebted to the unusual

movement about him, pursued his favourite sport of bird-hunting in the gardens of the Tuileries, and attached more importance to the feats of a well-trained sparrow-hawk, than to the probable qualities of the bride provided for him by the policy of his royal mother.

And amid all this splendid excitement, gliding from one glittering group to another, with a quiet self-possession and a calm composure strangely at variance with the scene around her, moved a lady whose remarkable appearance must have challenged attention, even had her singular career not already tended to make her an object of universal curiosity and speculation. Short of stature, and slender of form, with a step as light and noiseless as that of an aerial being; her exquisitely-moulded although diminutive figure draped in a robe of black velvet, made after a fashion of which the severe propriety contrasted forcibly with the somewhat too liberal exposure of the period; with a countenance pale almost to sallowness; delicately chiselled features; and large eyes, encircled by a dark ring, only a few shades less black than the long lashes by which they were occasionally concealed; a mass of rich and glossy hair, tightly banded upon her forehead, and gathered together in a heavy knot, supported by long bodkins tipped with jewels, low in her neck behind; and above all with that peculiar expression spread over her whole person which is occasionally to be remarked in individuals of that exceptional organ-

isation which appears to be the lot of such as are predestined to misery.

Not a princess of the blood, not a duchess of the realm, but had a smile and a courteous and eager word to bestow upon this apparently insignificant personage; at whose signal even the door of the Queen's private closet, closed against other intruders, opened upon the instant, as though she alone of all that brilliant galaxy of rank and wealth were to know no impediment, and to be subjected to no delay.

We have been somewhat prolix in our description of this extraordinary woman; but we shall be pardoned when we explain that we here give the portrait of Leonora Galigaï Marquise d'Ancre, the friend, confidant, and foster-sister of Marie de Medicis.

It is, however, time to return to the festivities to which allusion has already been made. Among these the most remarkable was a splendid carousal which took place in the Place Royale, and which is elaborately described by Bassompierre. The French kings had originally held their tournays, tilts, and passages at arms, in the Rue St. Antoine, opposite the palace of the Tournelles; but the unfortunate death of Henry II., who was killed there by the lance of the Duke de Montgommery, caused the spot to be abandoned; and they were subsequently transferred to the Place Royale, which had been built in the ancient park of the same palace.

The lists on the present occasion were two hundred

and forty feet in length, and were surrounded by barriers, and platforms arranged amphitheatrically, and reaching to the first stories of the houses. Facing the lists was erected the magnificent pavilion destined to their Majesties, which was richly draped with blue and gold, and surmounted by the great national standard, upon which the eagles of Austria, and the arms of the Medici were proudly quartered with the *fleurs-de-lis* of France.

By command of the Queen the lists were held by the Dukes de Guise and de Nevers, and the marquis de Bassompierre, an honour which cost each of the individuals thus favoured the enormous sum of fifty thousand crowns; a fact which is easily understood when it is considered that their retinue consisted of five hundred persons, and two hundred horses, the whole of whom, men and animals, were clad and caparisoned in scarlet velvet and cloth of silver. The number of spectators, exclusive of the court and the armed guards, was estimated at ten thousand; and from nine in the morning until six in the evening, the lists were constantly occupied. Salvos of artillery, fireworks, and allegorical processions succeeded; and the populace, delighted by "the glorious three days" of revel and relaxation thus provided for them, forgot for the time to murmur at an outlay which threatened them with increased exactions.

At the termination of this carousal, which was followed by balls, banquets, and tiltings at the ring,

the court removed to Fontainebleau; where their Majesties shortly afterwards received the Marquis Spinola, the Count de Buquoy,* and Don Rodrigo Calderon,† who were entertained with great magnificence, and lodged in the house of Bassompierre.‡ At this period, indeed, everything sufficed as a pretext for splendour and display; as Marie de Medicis especially delighted to exhibit the brilliancy of her court to the subjects of the nation with which she was about to become so intimately

* Charles de Longueval, Count de Buquoy, was so eminently distinguished for his military talents that Philip III. of Spain, and the Emperor Ferdinand II., confided to him the command of their joint armies in 1619. He completely defeated the forces of the malcontents in Bohemia; and then marched upon Hungary, which had just elected Bethlem-Gabor as its sovereign. In 1621 he overcame the troops of the Magyar monarch, which were entirely routed; but was killed the same year, in a skirmish with a small party of the enemy.

† Don Rodrigo Calderon, was a statesman rendered famous by his extraordinary elevation and his equally remarkable reverses. Born at Antwerp, the son of a Spanish trooper and a Flemish woman of low extraction, his talents ultimately raised him to the rank of confidant and favourite of the Duke de Lerma, prime minister of Philip III., through whose influence he subsequently became Count d'Oliva, Marquis de Siete-Iglesias, and secretary of state. In 1618 the disgrace of his patron involved his own ruin. Accused of having poisoned the Queen Marguerite, he was (in 1619) committed to a dungeon, and two years afterwards was sacrificed by the Count-Duke d'Olivarès to the public hatred against the Duke de Lerma. He perished upon the scaffold in 1621.

‡ Bassompierre, Mém., pp. 78, 79.

allied. In this endeavour she was ably seconded by the Guises and the Duke d'Epernon, who, since the departure of the two princes, had shared her intimity with the Marquis d'Ancre and his wife ; while a new candidate for her favour had moreover presented himself in the person of the young and handsome Cheyalier de Guise, the brother of the duke,* who at this time first appeared at court, where he had the honour of waiting upon her Majesty at table, whenever she was the guest of the duchess his mother, or the Princess de Conti his sister. His youth, high spirit, exhaustless gaiety, and extraordinary personal beauty, rendered him peculiarly agreeable to Marie, who displayed towards him a condescending kindness which was soon construed by the court-gossips into a warmer feeling.

Concini immediately took the alarm, and hastened to confide his apprehensions to the ministers, whom he knew to be as anxious as himself to undermine the influence of the Duke d'Epernon and the formidable family to which he had allied his interests. In ridding themselves, by neglect and disrespect, of the princes of the blood, the discomfited confederates had anticipated undivided sway over the mind and measures of the Regent; and their mortification was consequently intense when they discovered that she had unreservedly flung herself into the party of their enemies.

* François Paris de Lorraine, Chevalier de Guise.

The annoyance of the ministers, was, however, based rather on public grounds than on personal feeling; but the case was far different with the marquis, who had been reluctantly compelled to acknowledge to himself that he was indebted for his extraordinary fortune entirely to the influence of his wife; and that he was individually of small importance in the eyes of her royal mistress. This conviction had soured his temper; and instead of responding to the ardent affection of Leonora, he had recently revenged his outraged vanity upon the woman to whom he owed all the distinction he had acquired. The high spirit of the marquise revolted at this ingratitude; and scenes of violence had consequently occurred between them which tended to increase the schism, and to render his position still more precarious. The tears of Leonora were universally all-powerful with the Queen, who did not hesitate to express her indignation at the unbecoming deportment of the aggrandised gentleman; upon which, unaccustomed to rebuke, he threatened to withdraw entirely from the court and to reside at Amiens, a design which he however abandoned when he discovered that it met with no opposition.

The Duke de Guise, and the other members of his family, rejoicing in these domestic discords, which they trusted would ultimately tend to the disgrace of the arrogant Italian whose undue elevation had inspired them with jealousy and disgust, warmly espoused the cause of Leonora, and exerted all their power to irritate

the mind of the Queen against the offending marquis: nor was it long ere the ministers adopted the same line of policy; and, finally, Concini found himself so harassed and overlooked, that he resolved to attach himself to the party of the princes, and to aid them in their attempt to overturn the government.*

The Maréchal de Bouillon had, as already stated, been dispatched to England, in order to render James I. favourable to the alliance with Spain; and at the same time with strict instructions to induce him, should it be possible, to declare his displeasure at the recent conduct of the Protestants at Saumur, and especially at that of the Duke de Rohan. This was a mission which Bouillon joyfully undertook, his personal hatred and jealousy of the young duke warmly seconding the instructions of the ministers. Rohan had, however, been warned in time of the intentions of his enemies; and being in constant correspondence with Prince Henry, he hastened to entreat his interest with his royal father to avert the impending danger.

Unaware of this fact, the maréchal commenced his harangue by assuring the English monarch of the respect and attachment felt for his person by his own sovereign and his august mother, and their decided resolution that the alliance with Spain should in no way interfere with the good understanding which they were anxious to maintain with the Protestant princes.

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 139.

To this assurance James listened complacently; and encouraged by his evident satisfaction, the envoy proceeded to inform him that he was moreover authorised to state that the Pope had no intention of exercising any severity against the reformed party in France, but would confine himself to attempting their conversion by means of the pulpit eloquence and good example of the Roman priesthood. The satisfaction of James increased as he listened; and when he had warmly expressed his gratification at the intelligence, Bouillon ventured to insinuate that the Regent had been deeply wounded by the fact of his having entered into the Protestant League of Germany; and besought him, in her name, to be favourable to his Catholic subjects.

At this point of the discourse, James cautiously replied that the League involved no question of religion, but was purely a measure adopted for the reciprocal security of the confederated States; and that, as regarded the English Catholics, he would willingly permit the peaceable exercise of their faith in his dominions, so soon as they should have given pledges of their fidelity and obedience. Still undismayed, Bouillon then exposed what was to himself personally the most important feature of his mission; and urged his Britannic Majesty to express his disapproval of the proceedings of the assembly at Saumur, and especially of the attitude assumed by the Duke de Rohan. Here, however, he was fated to discover that James had not for a moment been the dupe of his sophistical elo-

quence, ably as it had been exerted. A cloud gathered upon the brow of the English monarch; and as the maréchal paused for a reply, he was startled by the coldness and decision with which it was delivered.

"If the Queen your mistress," said James with marked emphasis; "sees fit to infringe the edicts accorded to the Protestants of her kingdom, I shall not consider that the alliance into which I have entered with France ought to prevent me from assisting and protecting them. When my neighbours are endangered from a cause in which I am personally involved, I am naturally called upon to avert an evil that may extend to myself. Believe me, moreover, Marshal, when I say that you will be wise to effect a reconciliation with the Duke de Rohan; and I shall cause him to understand that such is my wish."

The ill-success of his mission was a bitter mortification to M. de Bouillon, who returned to Paris dispirited and crest-fallen to report his failure. He, however, met with no sympathy, the ministers declaring that he had failed through his neglect of their instructions, and the express orders of the Regent; while the maréchal complained on his side, that he had been selected for this delicate embassy, from the express intention of those who inveighed against him to accomplish his disgrace.

M. de Lesdiguières also, at this period, discovered that he had been the dupe of his own ambition, and the tool of that of others. The ducal brevet of which he

had considered himself secure was refused to him upon the plea that MM. de Brissac and de Fervaques were both senior marshals to himself, and that such a favour could not be conferred upon him without exciting their indignation. Vainly did he urge the promise made to him by Henry IV., neither the Regent nor her ministers would yield; when, irritated by the part which he had been made to play while his co-operation was necessary to the accomplishment of their measures, and the after-affront to which he was thus subjected, he retired from the court in disgust, and transferred his services to the princes of the blood.

As we have already stated, Concini had, although less openly, followed the same course; but, in the first instance, he had skilfully effected a reconciliation with his wife, and induced her to assist him in his endeavour to weaken the extraordinary influence which the Duke d'Epernon and the Guises were rapidly acquiring over the Regent, who willingly forgot, amid the constant amusement and adulation with which they surrounded her, the cares and anxieties of government. The Duke de Vendôme had also attached himself to the court party; and this domestic league had consequently become more formidable than ever in the eyes of those who saw their interests compromised by its continuance.

Marie could not, however, conceal from herself the absolute necessity of conciliating the disaffected princes before the arrival of the ambassador of Philip, who was

shortly expected to claim the hand of Madame for the Prince of Spain; and she accordingly determined to pave the way towards a reconciliation by thwarting the ambition of the great nobles who were obnoxious to them. The first opportunity that presented itself of adopting this somewhat ungenerous policy was afforded by the Duke de Vendôme, who demanded the royal sanction to preside the States of Brittany of which province he was governor; but his intention having been discovered by the Count de Soissons and M. de Condé, they lost no time in warning their friends at court against such a concession, and in reminding them that he had allied himself with the enemies of his royal father and the house of Bourbon; and that his influence might prove fatal to the tranquillity of the nation, should he be permitted to exert it in a distant province, where his personal consideration and the enormous wealth of his wife, must conduce to render him all-powerful. These arguments were impressed upon the Regent alike by the ministers and by the Marquis d'Ancre, who no sooner saw himself once more in favour than he exerted all his influence to undermine the power of the rival faction; and as her private views warmly seconded their representations, Marie instantly resolved to refuse the coveted favour.

When therefore the Duke de Vendôme proffered his request, the Queen met it with a cold denial, and instructed M. de Brissac to proceed at once to Brittany as his substitute; an affront which so stung the duke

that he immediately challenged de Brissac; but before the meeting could take place it was betrayed to the Queen, who, irritated by this disregard of her authority, would not be induced to wait until a reconciliation could be effected between them, but issued a peremptory order that M. de Vendôme should leave the court on the instant, and retire to his estate of Anet, and that the Maréchal de Brissac should forthwith proceed to Brittany. In vain did the fiery young Prince explain and expostulate, Marie was inexorable; and although the Dukes de Guise and d'Epernon interceded in his behalf, they were equally unsuccessful; nor did they discontinue their entreaties until the Queen bade them rather look to the stability of their own favour than hasten its termination by upholding the cause of those who rebelled against her pleasure.

This incident afforded unmitigated gratification to the absent princes; but to the Count de Soissons it was nevertheless only the herald of more important concessions on the part of the Regent. In his temporary retirement he had dwelt at leisure on his imaginary wrongs; his hatred of the ministers had increased; and, above all, he had vowed the ruin of the chancellor. In his nephew the Prince de Condé he found a willing listener, and an earnest coadjutor; but from a very different impulse. M. de Soissons panted for power, and loathed every impediment to the gratification of his ambition; while the young Prince, less firm of purpose, and more greedy of pleasure and ostentation, was wearied

by the obscurity of his existence, and the tedium of his self-imposed exile.

Concini, with admirable tact, played upon the weakness of both princes, and augmented their discontent; while he was at the same time careful to exonerate the Regent from all blame. Conscious that without her support he could not sustain for an hour the factitious power to which he had attained, he laboured incessantly to throw the whole odium of the disunion upon the ministers, who were fully as obnoxious to himself as to the princes.

"They it is;" he continually repeated; "who are the true cause of your estrangement. The Queen is, as I know, well disposed towards all the princes of the blood; but Sillery, Villeroy, and Jeannin are constantly representing to her the danger of allowing you to become too powerful. Your real enemies are the ministers who are fearful of affording you the opportunity of overbalancing their influence."

This assurance was too flattering to the self-love of the princes to be repulsed; they forgot that Concini himself had been as eager as those whom he now inculpated to destroy their importance, and to limit their power: they saw the great nobles, whose ambition was disappointed, or whose vanity was wounded, successively espouse their cause; and they were easily induced to believe that the time was not far distant when they should triumph over their opponents, and be repaid for all their mortifications. This was precisely the mood of

mind to which Concini had endeavoured to bring them; and so ably did he avail himself of his advantage that at length, when on one occasion he found himself in company with the Prince de Condé, the Count de Soissons, and the Marshals de Bouillon and de Lesdiguières, he induced them to unite with him in attempting the ruin of the ministers.

He was, moreover, powerfully abetted in his intrigue by the Duke of Savoy; who, outraged at the insult which had been offered to him by the Regent in bestowing the hand of Madame Elisabeth, which had been solemnly promised to the Prince of Piedmont, upon the Infant of Spain; and who, moreover, hoped to profit by the internal dissensions of France, and to recover through the medium of the disaffected princes, the provinces which Henry IV. had compelled him to relinquish in exchange for the marquisate of Saluzzo, omitted no opportunity of endeavouring to foment a civil war; from which, while he had nothing to apprehend, he had the prospect of reaping great personal advantage.

Thus supported, Concini, who was aware of the intimate relations subsisting between Charles Emmanuel and the Count de Soissons, did not hesitate to urge the princes to a resolute resistance; nor was this seed of rebellion scattered upon sterile soil. M. de Soissons pledged himself that on his return from Normandy, where he was about to sojourn for a short time, he would publicly insult the chancellor; while M. de Les-

diguières, who was still furious at the disappointment to which he had been subjected, and who was about to return to Dauphiny, volunteered, should the princes decide upon enforcing their claims, to march ten thousand infantry and fifteen hundred horse to the gates of Paris.

Nor did the vindictive Italian confine his efforts to thus tampering with the disaffected princes; he was equally indefatigable with the Regent, who even had she been disinclined to regard his own representations, never neglected those of her beloved Leonora; and who was, moreover, the better disposed to yield to his arguments because she saw her foster-sister once more happy, and believed that the affection of the marquis had been restored to his wife through her own influence.

Success rendered Concini bold. He was aware that he had secured a strong hold upon the confidence and regard of the malcontents; but when he found the Queen inclined to make concessions in their favour which threatened to invest them with a power as dangerous to his own interests as that now wielded by the ministers, he did not hesitate to dissuade her from her purpose. Anxious to conciliate the Count de Soissons, Marie declared her determination to effect this desirable result by bestowing upon him the government of Quillebœuf, the refusal of which had been the original cause of his estrangement; a resolve from which she was, however, diverted by the representations of the Italian that such a concession, thus tardily and reluctantly made, must be fatal to her dignity, and would only lead to fresh demands

on the part of the Prince, whose insatiable ambition was no secret; while, fearful lest his own representations should fail to change her purpose, he employed his confidential friend and ally the Baron de Luz, to entreat of the Duke de Guise to second his endeavour. In this attempt, however, the marquis failed through an excess of subtlety, as the duke, outraged by this double treason, not only refused to lend himself to so dishonourable an act of treachery, but immediately informed M. de Soissons of the deceit which was practised towards him; and feeling deeply aggrieved moreover by the affront that had been offered to César de Vendôme, he declared himself prepared to espouse the cause of the princes against the machinations of the Marquis d'Ancre. His example was followed by the whole of his family, as well as by the Cardinal de Joyeuse and the Duke de Bellegarde; and thus the unfortunate Regent was suddenly deprived of all her friends with the sole exception of the Duke d'Epernon; who, either from an excess of pride which would not permit him to humble himself so far as to induce him to pay his court to the princes from whom he had received so many and such bitter mortifications, or from the state of indisposition under which he was at that period labouring, refused to take any share in the intrigues of the court.

Concini became alarmed; he had so long been the spoilt child of fortune that every reverse overthrew his self-possession; and in the first paroxysm of his terror he considered himself lost. Chance and his own ready

cunning still, however, stood his friends. The grand-equerry (Bellegarde) was, with the insane superstition of the time, accused of having suborned witnesses to prove that the marquis had endeavoured by means of a magic mirror, to inspire some of the highest ladies of the court with a passion for his person; and as Concini demanded reparation for this injury, an investigation was instituted, to effect which it was necessary that summonses should be issued to the witnesses. Sillery, to whom the Italian was peculiarly obnoxious, and who was the friend of the Duke de Bellegarde, made some difficulty when called upon to affix the official seal to these documents; upon which Concini hastened to complain to the Regent that the chancellor was endeavouring to sacrifice him to his enemies; and Marie, indignant no less at the apparent injustice shown to her favourite, than at the delay evinced in obeying her commands, made no attempt to disguise her displeasure.

On the other hand the Count de Soissons, who still hoped to obtain from the courtesy, or to wring from the fears of the Regent, the promised government of Quillebœuf, made a voyage into Normandy, which so alarmed the Maréchal de Fervaques who held the city, and who apprehended that the Prince was about to possess himself of it by force, that he privately reinforced the garrison; a fact which M. de Soissons no sooner ascertained than he bitterly upbraided the maréchal, and a quarrel ensued between them that produced new difficulties.

Unfortunately Marie de Medicis was at this moment surrounded by evil and interested advisers, by whom she was induced to embroil herself, not only with the princes of the blood and great nobles, but also with the Parliament, and eventually with the Protestants. The misunderstanding which had arisen between the Duke de Rohan and the Maréchal de Bouillon, unhappily produced a disunion among the Huguenot party which laid them open to the machinations of their enemies; and Marie, whose zeal for the Romish communion always made her eager to harass and oppress them, was readily persuaded to undertake the annullation of the edicts by which their allegiance had hitherto been secured. Bouillon had never forgiven the Duke de Rohan for the energetic part which he had played at the assembly of Saumur; and secure of his influence over the spirit of the Regent, who felt grateful for the offer of his services upon that occasion, and the efforts which he had made to carry out her wishes, he resolved to undermine the interests of the young duke, and to attempt to deprive him of his government of St. Jéan-d'Angély which had been bestowed upon him by Henry IV.

Apprised of his intention, M. de Rohan hastened to court in order to justify himself, but the mind of Marie had been poisoned against him, and she treated his remonstrances with a chilling indifference. Aware that the mayor of the town had been bought by his enemies, and that should he be continued in his authority, he must himself inevitably lose his government, and thereby

forfeit all his influence, the duke no sooner saw the period of the municipal election approach, than, pretexting the dangerous illness of his brother, he took his leave of the court and hastened back to St. Jean-d'Angély in order to compel the retirement of the obnoxious functionary. As he had anticipated, on the day of the canvass a letter was received from the ministers, ordaining the re-election of the mayor without modification or explanation of any kind; an affront which so exasperated M. de Rohan, that he at once resisted its enforcement; declaring that the Regent had been misinformed with regard to the state of the town, which, according to the erms of the letter, was inferred to be divided into parties; and that, as he would undertake to convince her Majesty of the error under which she laboured, they had only to proceed at once to a new election.

Bouillon had been prepared for this opposition; and found it easy to induce Marie, whose jealousy of power always rendered her on such occasions as the present a mere tool in the hands of her *soi-disant* friends, to forward a second and more stringent order for the continuance in office of the existing mayor. The duke, however, persisted in disregarding the mandate; and after having dispatched his secretary to the Louvre to explain the reasons of his resistance, he proceeded to authorise the nomination of three persons, all eligible for the office, in order that the Regent might make her own selection; and, while awaiting her reply, the keys of the

city were confided to the senior sheriff; and he found himself complete master of the place.*

Nothing could exceed the indignation of Marie de Medicis on learning this contempt of her authority. The messengers of M. de Rohan were forthwith committed to the Bastille; orders were issued to the duchess his mother, to his wife, and to his sisters, not to leave the capital; and preparations were even made to besiege the duke in St. Jean-d'Angély as a rebel. Manifestoes were next put forth by both parties to the Protestants; those of the Queen-mother protesting that the aggressive measures which she was about to adopt, involved no question of faith, but were destined to be directed simply against M. de Rohan as an individual; and that consequently they would in no degree affect the edicts of pacification, which would be rigidly observed; and calling upon all the faithful subjects of the King, whatever might be their religious persuasion, to aid and abet the effort by which she trusted to subdue the nascent rebellion threatened by so gross a disregard of the constituted authorities of the realm. The duke, on his side, threw himself upon the justice and generosity of his co-religionists, reminding them that it was through zeal for their common faith that he had incurred the resentment of the court; and having so done, he

* Mém. du Duc de Rohan, Book I. Vie de du Plessis-Mornay, Book III.

hastened to place the city in such a state of defence as should enable him to resist the attack of the royal troops.

The resolute position thus assumed by M. de Rohan alarmed the ministers; who, apprehensive that the neighbouring provinces, already disaffected by the negative result of the assembly of Saumur, would support the cause of so bold a recusant, and thus renew the civil war by which the nation had formerly been convulsed, became anxious to temporise. Negociations were accordingly commenced between the adverse factions; and it was ultimately agreed that the keys of the city should be restored to the mayor from whom they had been taken, and some subaltern officers displaced by the duke reinstated in their functions, and that so soon as this arrangement had been completed, a new election should take place, by which M. de Rohan was to be at liberty to substitute others more agreeable to himself. This absurd ceremony was accordingly performed: the royal authority was supposed to have enforced its recognition; and the duke, by a merely visionary concession, preserved his government.*

Meanwhile the young Duke de Mayenne had taken leave of the court, and departed with a brilliant suite for Madrid, to demand the hand of the Infanta for the King of France; and on the same day the Duke de

* Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 142—152. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 36—38. D'Estrées, Mém., pp. 294—298. Matthieu, Hist. des Derniers Troubles, Book III, pp. 473, 474.

Pastrano left the Spanish capital on his way to Paris to solicit that of Madame Elisabeth for the Prince of Spain.

The ducal envoy reached the French capital early in the month of July, accompanied by his brothers Dom François and Dom Diego de Sylva, and a number of Spanish grandees, having been received with extraordinary honours in every town which he had traversed after passing the frontier. The Dukes of Luxembourg* and Nevers met him beyond the gate of the city, accompanied by five hundred nobles on horseback, sumptuously attired in velvet and cloth of gold and silver, with their horses splendidly caparisoned. The retinue of the Iberian grandee was not, however, as the French courtiers had fondly flattered themselves that it would have been, eclipsed by the lavish magnificence of their own appearance, his personal costume being of the most splendid description, his horses and equipages costly and gorgeous, and his numerous train of attendants habited in a livery of extreme richness.

On the 16th of the month, the Spanish duke had his first audience of the young King, at which were assembled the princes of the blood, all the high nobility of France,

* Henry, Duke de Luxembourg-Pinei, was a descendant of the celebrated Count de Saint-Pol, and the last male representative of his family. He died in 1616, leaving one daughter, Marguerite Catherine de Luxembourg, who married the Count Charles Henry de Clermont-Tonnerre, and became the mother of Madelaine, wife of François de Montmorency, commonly known in history as the Marshal de Luxembourg.

and the Cardinals of Sourdis and Bonzi.* The two latter dignitaries endeavoured to excuse themselves, on the pretext that their rank as princes of the church would not permit them to seat themselves below the princes of the blood; but this pretension on their part was considered so monstrous, even by the Regent herself, that, anxious as she was to secure their attendance in order to render the ceremony more imposing to the Spanish envoy, she did not venture to support them in their arrogant assumption of equality with the first subjects of the crown; and she accordingly informed them in reply, that upon the present occasion there would be no regard paid to precedence, but that each individual who was entitled to attend the audience, would be at liberty to seat himself as he saw fit.

Thus assured, the two prelates, attired in their rich robes of violet-coloured velvet, entered the hall; and were about to take their places near the royal daïs, when the princes of the blood, led by M. de Condé, hastily passed them, and ranged themselves in line on the right hand of the King. The cardinals then proceeded to adopt a similar position beside the Queen-Regent, but they were immediately displaced by the dowager-Princess de Condé, her daughter-in-law, and Madame de Conti; and upon finding themselves thus excluded from the immediate neighbourhood of the sovereign, they withdrew in great displeasure, no effort being made to detain them.

* Pierre de Gondi, Bishop of Langres, and subsequently of Paris, who was created a cardinal by Sixtus V. in 1587. He died in the French capital in 1616, in his eighty-fourth year.

Nor was this the only altercation which took place before the commencement of the ceremony; and the one which we are about to relate is so characteristic of the manners of that age among the great, that it must not be omitted. The Duke de Nevers had taken his place upon the bench appropriated to the princes of the blood, immediately below M. de Soissons, who, being engaged in conversation with his brother, the Prince de Conti, did not remark the intrusion. M. de Condé, however, who was seated above his two uncles, at once discovered the enormity of which the duke had been guilty, and he forthwith commenced pushing the Prince de Conti so violently that he excited his attention; and his purpose was no sooner understood than his example was imitated with an energy which was instantly communicated to the Count de Soissons, who in his turn so pressed upon M. de Nevers that he became extremely irritated, and demanded why he was subjected to such ungracious treatment.

"Because this is not a place for you," haughtily retorted the Prince de Condé.

The Duke de Nevers made a bitter rejoinder, and high words ensued, which were at length terminated by the Prince, who said significantly: "We can explain ourselves better elsewhere, M. le Duc; follow me."

The conversation had, however, been overheard by the Maréchal de Bouillon, who hastened to inform the King that the two princes had retired for a hostile purpose, upon which Louis ordered them to be instantly

recalled; and after having rebuked M. de Nevers for assuming a place to which he was not entitled, insisted upon their immediate reconciliation.*

The Duke de Pastrano was then introduced by M. de Guise and his two brothers; and after the usual ceremony of welcome on the one side and obeisance on the other, he presented to the King and his royal mother the letters with which he had been intrusted by his sovereign. Thence he proceeded to the apartments of Madame Elisabeth, where he delivered those of the Prince of Spain; after which he was conducted to the presence of the other children of France; and finally, having paid his respects to every member of the royal family, he was attended by a brilliant retinue of nobles to the residence which had been appropriated to his use during his sojourn in the capital.

So unparalleled was the splendour displayed upon this occasion, that the year 1612 was long known in Europe as "the year of magnificence;" the festivals having been alike gorgeous throughout France, Spain, and Naples; and considerable mortification was experienced in the former kingdom, when it was ascertained, on the return of the Duke de Mayenne, that the display made in Paris, extraordinary as it was, could not equal that exhibited at Lerma and Madrid. In the former city the favourite of Philip had received the French envoy in his own palace, and had lodged him in an apartment hung

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. ii, pp. 697—700.

with tapestry of silk and gold, intermingled with emeralds and rubies. In Madrid it is true that the mourning still worn for the late Queen, somewhat modified the brilliancy of the spectacle; but as every effort had been made to counteract the effect of this drawback, it became rather a singular feature, than an actual blot upon the gorgeousness of the spectacle presented by the Spanish capital.*

On the 25th of August the marriage articles were signed between Madame Elisabeth and the Prince of Spain: the dowry of the girl-bride being five hundred thousand golden crowns; after which the Duke de Pastrano, laden with magnificent presents, and satiated with pleasure and festivity, took his leave of the French court, and left Paris on his return to Madrid.

The contract between Louis XIII. and the Infanta was meanwhile completed on the 22nd of the month in the Spanish capital; and at the close of the ceremony the Duke de Mayenne was conducted to a saloon in which Philip was seated with the betrothed Prince and Princess on his right and left, awaiting his arrival. After having profoundly saluted the King in perfect silence, the duke approached the Infanta, to whom he addressed himself as to the Queen of France. His compliment was courteously received; and before the termination of this private audience, when on taking

* Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 153, 154. Mercure Français, 1612.

leave he would have bent his knee and kissed the hand of the sovereign and his son, each in succession saluted him upon the cheek; an honour as great as it was unexpected; particularly in a court where the observances of strict etiquette were more rigidly enforced than elsewhere in Europe.

The festivities consequent upon the double betrothal occupied several days, and they no sooner came to a close than the French envoy demanded a parting audience of his future sovereign, at which he entreated of her to intrust him with some letter or message for the King his master.

"Tell him;" said the Princess eagerly; "that I am very impatient to see him."

"Oh, Madam!" exclaimed the Countess d'Altamira, her *gouvernante;* "what will his Majesty of France think of your Royal Highness, when my Lord Duke informs him that you are in such haste to become a wife?"

"You have always taught me to tell the truth," was the ready retort; and charged with this sincere and singular communication, M. de Mayenne returned to Fontainebleau.

The Duke of Savoy had no sooner ascertained that the hand of Madame Elisabeth was definitively pledged to the Spanish prince, than he declared to the Queen-Regent his readiness to receive that of the Princess Christine for his own son; and for awhile Marie had affected to favour the alliance; but her great ambition

was to see each of her daughters upon a throne; and she had accordingly entered into a negociation with the English monarch, to effect a marriage between the younger Princess and Henry Prince of Wales, who was about to be betrothed to the Princess of Savoy. She was the more encouraged to hope for the success of this proposal, as James had already been a candidate for the hand of her elder daughter; nor was she deterred by the knowledge that the Grand-Duke of Tuscany* had offered one of his sisters, with an enormous dowry, to the British prince.†

So eager, indeed, was Marie de Medicis to effect this alliance for the Princess Christine, that the English ambassador did not hesitate to declare to his government, that from the manner in which the affair had been urged upon him by M. de Villeroy, he felt a conviction that his royal master might conclude the treaty of marriage whenever he considered it expedient to do so, and moreover make whatever conditions he thought proper.

While the negociations were still pending, however, the lamentable death of the high-spirited and promising

* Cosmo II., Grand-Duke of Tuscany, succeeded his father Ferdinand in 1609. He was a Prince of liberal and peaceful sentiments, and greatly endeared himself to his subjects. He married Marie Madelaine, Archduchess of Austria, sister of the Queen of Spain and the Duchess of Savoy; and died in 1621, leaving his duchy to his elder son, Ferdinand II.

† Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. ii, pp. 647—654.

young Prince terminated at once the struggle for his hand; and Marie de Medicis, to her undisguised regret, found herself unable to realise one of her most cherished hopes.

On the 1st of November the Count de Soissons, who was suddenly attacked by scarlet fever, while still engaged in projects of ambition and revenge, also breathed his last; an event which was destined to effect a complete change in the aspect of the court. By his decease the governments of Dauphiny and Normandy, as well as the appointment of grand-master of the King's household, became vacant; and four-and-twenty hours had not elapsed before as many claimants presented themselves, eager to secure these coveted honours. The Prince had, however, left an infant son, to whom the Queen-Regent immediately transferred both the government of Dauphiny, and the place at court recently held by his father. As regarded Normandy, she resolved to retain it in her own hands, and to appoint a lieutenant-governor, to whom she could confide the command of the province; but she had no sooner declared her intention than she was met by the expostulations of M. de Conti, who reminded her that having formerly ceded the government of Dauphiny to the Count de Soissons at her request, he considered himself entitled to succeed to that which had now become available by his death.

Determined to retain her possession of the province, and yet fearful of exciting once more the resentment of the princes of the blood, the Regent was compelled to

propose a compromise, which, after some hesitation, was accepted by M. de Conti. It will be remembered that the Count d'Auvergne, Charles de Valois, recently become Duke d'Angoulême, had been committed to the Bastille by Henry IV. for conspiring with his father and sister against the person of the King and the tranquillity of the realm; nor is it probable that Marie de Medicis would have felt the slightest inclination to show any indulgence to the step-brother of Madame de Verneuil, had it not on the present occasion been a matter of policy to do so. The Marquis de Cœuvres was accordingly instructed to visit him in his prison, and to offer him his liberty, provided he would resign to the Prince de Conti his government of Auvergne; and although the duke at first evinced extreme reluctance to comply with this condition, he was ultimately induced to yield to the solicitations of the royal envoy, who convinced him that the freedom for which he yearned so eagerly could be purchased at no other price.*

The body of the Count de Soissons was conveyed to the Chartreuse at Gaillon, and there deposited in the tomb of his ancestors;† and before the close of the month the Queen-Regent assisted at the Hôtel de Soissons at Paris at the baptism of his son, which was

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 39, 40. Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 160. D'Estrées, Mém., p. 398.

† Matthieu, Hist. des Derniers Troubles, Book III, p. 474.

celebrated in the presence of all the most distinguished personages of the court.*

At this period a new cabal was organised which effectually neutralised all attempt at opposition. The chief of this formidable faction was the Prince de Condé; and it was moreover composed of the Dukes of Nevers, Mayenne, and Longueville, the Maréchal de Bouillon, and the Marquis d'Ancre. By this combination of rank, influence, and favour, the Guises, the Duke d'Epernon, and their adherents, saw themselves thrown into the background, and threatened with utter annihilation as a political party. The Connétable de Montmorency, who believed the power of the Guises to be firmly established, and who had consequently allied himself to their interests, was absent in Languedoc, of which province he was governor; while the grand-equerry, M. de Bellegarde, who was also their friend, was sojourning in Burgundy; and thus they found themselves opposed, almost without support, to the evil offices of the rival faction. The Queen openly espoused the cause of M. de Condé and his party, while the ministers soon saw themselves utterly deprived of both influence and credit; and at length, seriously alarmed by the posture of affairs, the Duke de Guise wrote to entreat M. de Bellegarde to return with all speed to Paris, in order to assist him in his endeavour to overthrow the rapidly-growing power of their mutual

* Bassompierre, Mém., p. 80.

adversaries. M. le Grand was preparing to comply with this request, when an order to the same effect reached him from the Regent, which tended to hasten his departure; but on arriving at Sens he was met by one of his friends, who warned him not to trust himself in the capital, as he had only been recalled in order that he might either be bribed or frightened into the resignation of his government, of which the Marquis d'Ancre had undertaken to effect the transfer to the Duke de Mayenne.

In consequence of this intimation M. le Grand, instead of appearing at court in compliance with the royal mandate, returned in all haste to Languedoc, and the Duke de Guise found himself deprived of his anticipated assistance.* Bellegarde himself, who attributed this attempt to deprive him of his government to the Baron de Luz—who through the influence of Bassompierre had been reinstated in the favour of the Queen, and had consequently abandoned the faction of the Guises, of whose projects and designs he was cognisant, in order to espouse the interests and to serve the ambition of the Marquis d'Ancre—vowed vengeance against the recreant baron, and complained bitterly to his friends of the insult to which he had been subjected through this unworthy agency.

The Guises, already apprehensive of the consequences which might accrue to themselves from the defection of

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 161. • Bassompierre, Mém., p. 80.

M. de Luz, were only too ready to sympathise with the indignant duke, and unfortunately for all parties they did not confine their sympathy to mere words. Ever prompt and reckless, they at once resolved to revenge themselves upon their common enemy; nor was it long ere they carried their fatal determination into effect.

CHAPTER V.

[1613.]

STATE OF FRANCE AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF 1613—CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BARON DE LUZ—HIS IMPRUDENCE—HE IS CHALLENGED BY THE CHEVALIER DE GUISE, AND KILLED—THE REGENT SUMMONS A COUNCIL — THE NOBLES ASSEMBLE AT THE HÔTEL DE GUISE — THE DUKE IS FORBIDDEN TO ENTER THE LOUVRE, AND ORDERED TO DISPERSE HIS FRIENDS—M. DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULT REFUSES TO LEAVE THE HÔTEL DE GUISE—HE IS EXILED FROM THE COURT—MODERATION OF THE DUKE DE GUISE—INFLEXIBILITY OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—HER ANGER AGAINST THE CHANCELLOR — SHE HOLDS A SECRET COUNCIL —THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ IS DIRECTED TO DEMAND THE SEALS FROM M. DE SILLERY, AND TO COMMAND HIM TO RETIRE FROM THE CAPITAL —MARIE DETERMINES TO ARREST THE DUKE D'EPERNON—HER DESIGNS ARE THWARTED BY CONCINI — THE MARQUIS D'ANCRE INTRODUCES THE SON OF M. DE LUZ TO THE REGENT—MARIE PROMISES HIM HER PROTECTION—BASSOMPIERRE ENDEAVOURS TO EFFECT THE RECAL OF THE DUKE DE GUISE, AND SUCCEEDS—HIS RECEPTION BY THE REGENT —ARROGANCE OF THE DUCHESS DE GUISE—THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ FORMS AN ALLIANCE WITH M. DE GUISE—INFLUENCE OF THE PRINCE —HE DEMANDS THE CAPTAINCY OF THE CHÂTEAU TROMPETTE—OVER-ZEALOUS FRIENDS—ALARM OF THE QUEEN—SHE RESOLVES TO CONCILIATE THE GUISES — THE MARQUIS D'ANCRE AND HIS WIFE INCUR THE DISPLEASURE OF THE QUEEN—MARIE PURCHASES THE LOYALTY OF THE DUKE DE GUISE — DIGNIFIED BEARING OF THE DUKE D'EPERNON—A RECONCILIATION—"PUT NOT YOUR FAITH IN PRINCES" —EXULTATION OF THE MINISTERS — A PRIVATE AUDIENCE—EAVES-DROPPERS — MORTIFICATION OF THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ — CONCINI ENDEAVOURS TO CONCILIATE THE QUEEN — HE IS REPULSED — THE YOUNG BARON DE LUZ CHALLENGES THE CHEVALIER DE GUISE— WOUNDS HIS ADVERSARY, AND IS KILLED—ROYAL SOLICITUDE—DEATH OF THE CHEVALIER DE GUISE—BANQUET AT THE HÔTEL DE CONDÉ—

AFFRONT TO BASSOMPIERRE—CONCINI RETIRES TO AMIENS—THE DUKE DE VENDÔME JOINS THE FACTION OF THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ—A NEW INTRIGUE—SUSPICIONS OF THE REGENT—MIDNIGHT VISITORS—THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ AND THE DUKE DE VENDÔME LEAVE THE COURT—THE REGENT REFUSES TO SANCTION THE DEPARTURE OF M. DE GUISE—THE QUEEN AND HER FAVOURITE—THE MINISTERS PLEDGE THEMSELVES TO SERVE CONCINI—PERIL OF BASSOMPIERRE—HE DETERMINES TO LEAVE FRANCE—IS DISSUADED FROM HIS PURPOSE BY THE REGENT—TROUBLES IN MANTUA—NEGOCIATION WITH THE DUKE OF SAVOY—JAMES I. OFFERS THE HAND OF PRINCE CHARLES OF ENGLAND TO THE PRINCESS CHRISTINE—SATISFACTION OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—THE POPE TAKES ALARM—THE REGENT AND THE PAPAL NUNCIO—DEATH OF THE MARÉCHAL DE FERVAQUES—CONCINI IS MADE MARSHAL OF FRANCE—LADIES OF HONOUR—THE QUEEN AND HER FOSTER-SISTER—THE PRINCESS DE CONTI—A WELL-TIMED VISIT—THE NEW MARÉCHAL—A SENSATION AT COURT.

CHAPTER V.

[1613.]

THE state of France at the commencement of the year 1613, was precarious in the extreme. As yet no intestine war had broken out, but there existed a sullen undercurrent of discontent and disaffection which threatened, like the sound of distant thunder, to herald an approaching storm. The court was, as we have shown, the focus of anarchy and confusion; the power and resources of the great nobles had steadily increased since the death of Henry IV., and had they only been united among themselves, the authority of Marie de Medicis must have been set at nought, and the throne of the boy-King have tottered to its base. The provinces were, in many instances, in open opposition to the government; the ministers indignant at the disrespect shown alike to their persons and to their functions; the Parliament jealous of the encroachments on its privileges; the citizens outraged by the lavish

magnificence, and indignant at the insolent assumption of the nobility; and the people irritated and impoverished by the constant exactions to which they were subjected in order to supply the exigences of the state.

Such was the condition of a kingdom dependent for its prosperity upon the rule of a favourite-ridden woman, and a helpless child.

We have already stated the anxiety of the Guises to revenge themselves upon M. de Luz; and we have now to relate the tragedy which supervened upon this resolution. It appears to be the common fate of all favourites to accelerate their own ruin by personal imprudence; nor was M. de Luz destined to prove an exception. His life had been a varied one; but the spirit of intrigue and enterprise with which he was endowed had enabled him to bid defiance to adverse fortune, and to struggle successfully against every reverse. Patient under disappointment because strong in his confidence of future compensation, he was less cautious in his more prosperous moments; and in one of these he was unhappy enough to afford a pretext for the violence of the enemies who had vowed his ruin.

Disregarding the presence of the Chevalier de Guise, or perhaps unconscious of his propinquity, de Luz, shortly after the return of the Duke de Bellegarde to Languedoc, was relating to a group of nobles, who were lounging away the time in the great gallery of the Louvre while

awaiting the appearance of the King, the circumstances which preceded the assassination of the Duke de Guise at Blois; boasting that he was present with the Maréchal de Brissac when Henry III. decided upon the murder, and had even prevented the former from intimating his danger to the intended victim. The chevalier who was young, impetuous, and like all the members of his house utterly careless of the consequences of his actions, would have felt himself justified in demanding satisfaction of M. de Luz simply for the insult offered to his brothers and himself by his abrupt and unscrupulous abandonment of their interests, and the affront given to their friend and ally the Duke de Bellegarde; but when, to these real or imagined injuries, was superadded the fact that he had publicly boasted of the share which he had gratuitously and wantonly taken in the murder of his father, no wonder that the fiery young man, disregarding alike the royal edicts against duelling and the dictates of humanity, at once resolved to silence the vauntings of the *quasi*-assassin, or to perish in the attempt.

At the moment in which he volunteered the fatal communication, de Luz was protected by the roof that covered him. It was certain death to any individual, whatever might be his rank, who drew a hostile weapon within the precincts of the royal palace; and de Guise was aware that by such an act of imprudence he might forfeit all hope of vengeance. He affected,

consequently, not to have overheard the imprudent admission of the baron, and controlled the impulse which would have led him to fell him as he stood; but his thirst of vengeance only became the more quenchless by delay, and he watched the movements of his destined victim with an assiduity which soon enabled him to appease it.

On the 5th of January at mid-day his carriage encountered that of M. de Luz in the Rue St. Honoré, when he immediately summoned him to alight, and defend himself; and at the second pass stretched him lifeless at his feet.*

The Regent, who since she had pardoned M. de Luz had found him a most zealous and efficient adherent, was angered beyond measure, not only at the wilful disregard of the royal authority exhibited by the chevalier, but also at the loss of an active and useful agent; and the intelligence had no sooner reached her than rising from her dinner, which she had just commenced when the news was brought, she burst into tears, and retired to her closet. When she had become somewhat more calm she assembled the council, by which she was advised to refer the matter to the Parliament; but while the subject was under deliberation, tidings reached the Louvre that a nume-

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. iii, pp. 23, 24. D'Estrées, Mém., pp. 398, 399. Bassompierre, Mém., p. 80. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 40, 41.

rous body of nobles had assembled at the hôtel of the Duke de Guise, who was himself about to set forth for the palace attended by a strong party of his friends. Alarmed at the prospect of such a demonstration, which bore the semblance of an enforcement of impunity rather than of a deprecation of justice, the Queen was entreated by those around her to dispatch M. de Châteauvieux to the residence of the Duke de Guise, to forbid his approach to the royal presence until formally summoned to appear; and to command in her name that all the persons who had assembled under his roof should immediately retire.

The Regent followed this advice, and on his return to the palace M. de Châteauvieux reported that he had rigidly performed his duty; that the duke had abandoned his intention of demanding an audience of her Majesty; and that although many of those by whom he was surrounded had originally refused to obey her commands, they had ultimately been induced to do so by the persuasions of M. de Guise himself, who represented the propriety of their compliance with her will; with the sole exception of M. de la Rochefoucault,* who had declined to quit the hôtel.

* François, Count (and subsequently Duke) de la Rochefoucault, master of the wardrobe to Louis XIII., was descended from one of the most ancient and noble families of France. He died in 1650.

The Queen immediately issued an order for his exile from the court, which was communicated to him upon the instant; nor was her indignation towards the Duke de Guise appeased even upon learning that he had evinced the greatest respect for her authority, and the most perfect submission to her will; or that when, after his encounter with M. de Luz, the chevalier had presented himself at his hôtel, and claimed his protection, he had refused to receive him, or in any way to countenance the crime of which he had been guilty.

The displeasure of the Regent was, moreover, greatly excited by the chancellor, who had evinced no disposition to proceed against M. de Guise; and she accordingly declared her determination to deprive him of the seals, and to bestow them upon some individual who would perform his duty more efficiently. For this purpose she secretly summoned the Prince de Condé, the Duke de Bouillon, and the Marquis d'Ancre to the Louvre, the whole of whom approved her intention; and it was arranged that M. de Condé should demand the seals, and at the same time command the chancellor in the name of their Majesties to retire to one of his estates. It was, moreover, resolved that Marie should name a day when she would dine at the hôtel of Zamet, and that on her way she should enter the Bastille, and cause the arrest of the Duke d'Epernon, who had only a week previously returned to court,

after a serious illness. The accomplishment of these hasty measures was, however, frustrated by the ambition of the Marquis d'Ancre, who was desirous to replace the chancellor by some creature of his own, while his wife was equally anxious that the vacant dignity should be conferred upon a person who was obnoxious to the Duke de Bouillon; and as it was necessary that in order to effect their purpose, they should each propose the same individual, so much time was lost that Marie had leisure to reconsider her intention, and to abandon it.*

The Marquis d'Ancre had, however, aggravated her displeasure against M. de Guise by introducing to her presence the son of the murdered man, who threw himself at her feet, weeping bitterly, and demanding justice.

The woman-heart of Marie de Medicis was deeply moved; and while her anger increased against the Guises, her sympathy for the sufferer before her melted her to tears. Bidding him take comfort, she promised all he asked; and before he withdrew conferred upon him the offices and pensions of his father, assuring him that he might thenceforward rely upon her protection.

At the close of a few days, Bassompierre, who was first gentleman of the chamber to the Regent, and greatly in her confidence; and who was anxious

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 204—206. D'Estrées, Mém., p. 399.

to reinstate the Duke de Guise in her favour, on account of his attachment for the Princess de Conti,* ventured to impress upon his royal mistress, not only the inexpediency of utterly estranging from her interests so powerful a family, but also the policy of recognising with indulgence and pardon the ready obedience and loyalty of the duke, who had not scrupled to sacrifice the safety of a brother to whom he was tenderly attached, to his sense of duty towards herself. Marie suffered him to proceed for some time in silence; but at length his zeal was rewarded by her consent to receive M. de Guise, and to listen to his offered justification, provided he came to the Louvre at nightfall, and alone.

After expressing his deep sense of this concession, Bassompierre hastened to communicate his success to the duke, who lost no time in presenting himself before his offended mistress; and so ably did he plead his cause, replacing his accustomed haughtiness and impetuosity by a demeanour at once respectful and submissive, that Marie de Medicis, whose attachment to his house had long been notorious, declared herself satisfied, and assured him that thenceforward she should hold him

* This lady, who had commenced her career at court by the most bitter enmity towards Bassompierre, was not long ere she became one of his firmest friends; and it was even asserted that, after the death of the Prince her husband, she privately bestowed her hand upon the fascinating gentleman of the bedchamber.

exonerated from any participation in the crime of his brother. Upon one point, however, the Regent remained firm; and, although the duke earnestly implored the recal of M. de la Rochefoucault, he was met by so decided a refusal that he was compelled to abandon all immediate hope of success. He had, nevertheless, save in this respect, every reason to congratulate himself upon his reception; and the affair would probably have elicited no further consequences, had not the duchess his mother, whose pride of birth, and natural arrogance led her to believe herself inferior to no crowned head in Europe; and who ill-brooked the authority of one whom she was accustomed to consider as a mere petty princess, indebted to circumstances for her temporary position of command, resolved to demand an interview upon the same subject, which having been accorded by the Regent, renewed with greater violence than ever the anger of Marie; who, justly irritated at finding herself defied and braved by one of her own subjects, dismissed the ill-judging duchess with so much harshness that the position of the offending parties became more onerous than before, and the interference of Bassompierre was rendered worse than useless.

Disconcerted by this unexpected disappointment M. de Guise, aware that no influence less than that possessed by the Marquis d'Ancre could any longer avail him, compelled himself to overcome his pride

sufficiently to entreat the good offices of the astute Italian; who, eager to seize so favourable an opportunity of strengthening the faction of the princes of the blood, referred him to M. de Condé, as the only individual likely to accomplish his reconciliation with the indignant Queen, and the rather as the Duke d'Epernon declared himself ready to second the appeal.*

This advice was eagerly adopted by M. de Guise; who found little difficulty in effecting his object, the princes having no sooner discovered that he had lost the favour of the Queen than they became anxious to attach him to their own interests; and so rapidly did this new alliance ripen that, with his usual impetuous recklessness, the young duke ere long requested Bassompierre never again to mention the recal of M. de la Rochefoucault to the Regent, as he should shortly accomplish it through the medium of the Prince de Condé; adding that thenceforward their mutual understanding would be so perfect that on the next occasion of the Queen's displeasure against himself, she would find no rod with which to chastise him.†

The influence of M. de Condé at this precise period was indeed so great as almost to justify the confidence of his new ally; but it was destined to be rapidly undermined by his own imprudence. He had long

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 40—42. Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 172, 173.

† Bassompierre, Mém., p. 81.

coveted the command of the Château Trompette, of which, although it was situated in the principal city of his government, he was not in possession; and believing that the Regent would not venture, under existing circumstances, to refuse to him what he had taught himself to consider as a right, he induced the Dukes of Mayenne and Epernon and the Marquis d'Ancre to make the demand in his name. His friends zealously obeyed his bidding, and urged the Queen to this, as they declared, unimportant concession; reminding her that as M. de Condé had devoted himself to her cause, he merited every favour which she could bestow upon him without danger to the state.

Marie de Medicis was not, however, prepared to regard this new demand upon her indulgence in so inconsequent a light. She apprehended, and not without reason, that the princes were endeavouring to sap the foundations of her authority, by possessing themselves of the fortresses of the crown; and it was consequently with a heightened colour that, having heard the arguments addressed to her, she briefly replied that she would give the subject her consideration. The three nobles, anxious for the success of their mission, were not, however, to be so easily discouraged; and they consequently proceeded to impress upon her Majesty the impolicy of a delay which could not fail to wound the susceptibility of the Prince; but the patience of Marie was not proof against this pertinacity, and again declaring that she should

take time to consider the subject, she rose from her seat and withdrew to her private closet, still closely followed by the applicants, her eyes flashing with anger as she discovered that they were even yet resolved to persecute her with their entreaties. Soon, however, she recovered her self-possession; and turning with a smile towards her obnoxious guests, she said as playfully as though no cause of annoyance were coupled with their presence: "I have just learnt a new gallantry of which Bassompierre has been the hero; he did not know that it would reach my ears, nor will he be well pleased to find that I have heard it."

"I trust that your Majesty will inform him of the discovery;" said the Duke de Nevers, instantly adding: "Approach, M. de Bassompierre; the Queen has something to confide to you."

"No, no;" replied Marie, in the same tone of banter which she had so suddenly assumed; "I shall not tell him one word of the matter."

At once surprised and alarmed the marquis immediately approached the Regent, and entreated her to let him hear the intelligence which she had to communicate; and he had no sooner done so than Marie, whose subterfuge had succeeded, moved to a distant window, and motioned to him to follow her. When she had reached the recess, she still continued to stand with her back towards the two dukes; and as Bassompierre gained her side, she said in a hasty whisper: "I know nothing,

of your intrigues; but tell me, has M. de Guise ceased to urge you to effect the return of La Rochefoucault?"

"Only three days ago, Madam, he bade me desist from importuning your Majesty upon the subject, as the Prince de Condé had promised him that it should be shortly accomplished through his own means; adding, moreover, that he could scarcely be blamed for adopting the interests of the princes, since your own creature, M. d'Ancre, had done the same."

As Bassompierre spoke warm tears gushed from the eyes of the Queen; "Yes;" she exclaimed bitterly; "the very men who induced me to oppose the princes and to offend the ministers, are now endeavouring to profit by my unsupported position, to undermine my authority, and to ruin my credit with the people. You heard how insolently they demanded a royal fortress for their leader; and I am well aware that should I grant their request it would only expose me to the necessity of making new concessions."

"Do not distress yourself, Madam;" replied the skilful courtier, eager to avail himself of so favourable an opportunity of serving his friends; "you can always command the means of recalling them to their allegiance; and, did I dare to proffer a counsel to your Majesty, I would suggest that you should employ them."

"We will talk no more at present;" said Marie; "return here when I have risen from table, and by that time I shall have had leisure to reflect upon your advice."

She then advanced once more to the centre of the apartment, and commenced a futile conversation, which she maintained until the departure of the two dukes; thus effectually preventing all recurrence to the obnoxious subject; but she was not destined to escape so readily as she had hoped, from this new persecution. Concini and his wife had alike pledged themselves to M. de Condé that they would support his pretensions with all their influence, and their vanity was consequently enlisted in the cause as much as their interests. The Queen-mother, therefore, no sooner found herself alone with Leonora than the subject was renewed; and that with so much pertinacious resolution that the dignity of the Regent took alarm, and she expressed herself with considerable bitterness to the presumptuous favourite. At this crisis Concini entered the apartment; and with as little caution as his wife had previously exhibited, persisted in urging upon his harassed mistress the same unpalatable advice; until, utterly wearied, and deeply indignant at an interference which exceeded all the bounds of courtesy and respect, Marie commanded them both to quit her presence, and gave instant orders that they should not again be admitted until she had signified her pleasure to that effect.

As the officers of the household were about to marshal the Regent to the mid-day meal, Bassompierre encountered the Duke de Guise, of whom he immediately inquired if he had abandoned the cause of the unfortunate La Rochefoucault, who would inevitably die of

ennui, should he be long exiled from the gaieties of the court.

"No, no;" vehemently replied the duke; "he shall return to share them; nor will I be under an obligation to the Queen for his reappearance. I have served her with zeal, and have been repaid by coldness and neglect. I have therefore made new interests, and now recognise no leader but M. de Condé, no coadjutors but his cabal; nor will I abandon them although I adopted their policy with reluctance; a determination, Monsieur," he added pointedly; "which you at least will not condemn, as you are a member of the same party."

"Your Lordship is partially in error;" said Bassompierre gaily. "I am, it is true, the very humble servant of all such individuals as are favoured by the Prince, but I do not recognise them as a political body. I am the devoted adherent of their Majesties, and I know no other masters. Pardon me, moreover, if I venture to say that you have yourself, M. le Duc, been very ill-advised. You were formerly the leader of your own faction, since it would appear that we are to talk of factions; you were dependent upon no one, and responsible only to yourself for your actions and opinions; and now you have allied your fortunes to those of persons by whom you will be subjected to a thousand indignities and annoyances when they no longer require your support. How, then, do you imagine that you will be able to brook such treatment, when you suffer yourself

to be angered and alienated by a cold word from the Regent? You should remember that your brother killed M. de Luz almost under her eyes, and in defiance of a stringent edict; and that you could scarcely anticipate the immediate recal of one of the officers of the King's household who had peremptorily refused to obey the royal command by which he was enjoined to leave your hôtel."

"Well, well;" exclaimed the duke impatiently; "the Queen will one day discover her error in having ventured to offer me a slight in order to gratify those by whom she suffers herself to be governed. She will ere long seek my friendship, but I shall either refuse to listen, or compel her to purchase it at a high price."

The Regent had no sooner returned to her closet than, in obedience to her orders, Bassompierre again presented himself; and, as soon as she had dismissed her attendants, she at once entered upon the subject that occupied her thoughts. "Bestein," she said, addressing the marquis by the name which she usually applied to him during their confidential interviews; "this wretched affair has totally unnerved me. I was unable to swallow any food; and unless my mind is relieved at once, I shall go mad. You must reconcile me to the Duke de Guise at any price. Offer him a hundred thousand crowns for himself, the commission of Lieutenant-General of Provence for his brother, and the reversion of the Abbey of St. Germain for the Princess de Conti. In one word, promise him what

you please, and I will consent, provided you annihilate this cabal, and detach him from the interests of the princes."

"Madam," replied Bassompierre with a gay smile; "you have filled my hands so amply that I am sure of making a successful bargain. But have I no similar commission with regard to M. d'Epernon?"

"Ah, would that I could hope so much;" said Marie gloomily; "but I have wounded his vanity, and he never forgives."

"Seldom perhaps, Madam;" was the ready rejoinder of the shrewd courtier; "his enemies, but readily his rulers."

"Endeavour then;" exclaimed the Queen eagerly; "to effect this also, Bestein; remind him of all that I have already done, both for himself and his children, and assure him that I have never lost the inclination to serve him. If any one can accomplish so desirable an object, you are the person."

Bassompierre lost no time in opening the important negociation with which he was intrusted; and the wiliness with which he first enlisted the ambition and cupidity of the females of the family presents a curious picture of the manners of the time. His success could not long remain doubtful at a period when the allegiance of the highest nobles of the land was bought and sold like the most common merchandise; and, accordingly, although as he informs us, the Duke de Guise for a time indulged in his ordinary extravagance of speech,

he gradually yielded, and—as a natural consequence—received the price of his venal concession!

On this occasion, however, M. d'Epernon, whose birth was far inferior to that of his friend, displayed a higher sense of what was due to himself and to his rank. "In matters of this importance;" he said proudly, as Bassompierre urged him once more to espouse the interests of the Regent, and hinted at the benefit likely to accrue to himself from his compliance with her wishes; "I never condescend to bargain. Decisions of real weight should be formed frankly and disinterestedly. I have no wish to capitulate with my sovereign. Offer me no bribe, for I should consider it only as an insult. Any service which I can render to the Queen has been already amply recompensed; and I should be unworthy alike of the name I bear, and of the offices I hold, did I place my loyalty at a price. I have only one favour to request of her Majesty before I again devote myself to her interests, and that is that she will henceforward exhibit more firmness, and attach a greater value to those who have served her with fidelity and zeal. This conceded, I am ready to attend her pleasure whenever she may see fit to summon me to her presence."

The exultation of Marie de Medicis at the happy termination of his mission rendered her profuse in her expressions of gratitude to Bassompierre; which she terminated by the assurance that he should be appointed first lord of the bedchamber to the young King, even should she, as she declared, be compelled to purchase

the post from her own private funds; and these preliminaries arranged, on the following morning at nine o'clock, the two dukes proceeded to pay their respects to her Majesty, by whom they were most graciously received; and who commanded that a seat should be placed for M. d'Epernon, whose recovery from a severe illness was, as we have already stated, only recent. The interview was a long one, and no allusion was made on either side to the late defection of the distinguished guests; who, on rising to retire, were invited by the Queen to attend her to the theatre that evening; and they had no sooner expressed their acknowledgments than she gave orders to the captain of her guard to have benches prepared for both the Duke d'Epernon, and M. Zamet, by whom he was to be accompanied.

This extraordinary favour excited universal comment when the assembled courtiers perceived that it was not even extended to the Duke de Mayenne, who was also present at the performance; and Concini, in particular, was so struck by the sudden change of affairs that he exclaimed energetically to Bassompierre beside whom he stood: "*Per Dio!* Monsieur, I can but laugh over the mutations of this strange world; the Queen has found a seat for Zamet, and there is none for the Duke de Mayenne. Place your faith in princes after this!"

Great was the exultation of the courtiers when the disgrace of Concini became known; but that of the ministers, as they learnt its cause, was even more profound. One web of the complicated mesh which

had been woven about the spirit of the Queen had at length given way; while her refusal to concede to the request of the Prince de Condé convinced them that he was no longer likely to prove so formidable an enemy to themselves as he had recently been. Acting upon this impression they hastened to solicit a private audience of the Regent, declaring that they had matters of great importance to treat with her, which they would only communicate to herself; and their satisfaction was complete when an answer was returned, appointing an hour for their appearance at the Louvre, and naming, as the place of their reception the private closet of the Queen.

"Messieurs," said Marie graciously, as they paused upon the threshold of the apartment to make the accustomed obeisance; "your request shall be strictly complied with." And then turning to the captain of her guard, she added: "M. de Senneterre, you will suffer no one to enter here, be he whom he may."

Delighted by the manner of their reception, the ministers at once entered upon the subject which had induced them to solicit the interview, and respectfully represented to the Regent the alarm which they had felt at the dangerous demand advanced by the Prince de Condé, and the exertions which they had ascertained were to be made by the Marquis d'Ancre to induce her Majesty's compliance; assuring her that the surrender of a royal fortress of such importance as the Château Trompette to the control of the first prince of

the blood, could not fail to prove prejudicial to the interests of the King and the tranquillity of the nation.

"I am fully aware of the importance of such a concession, Messieurs;" replied Marie with dignity; "and my resolution is already formed. I have not yet forgotten that my late lord your sovereign more than once assured me, that had he, while at war with Henry III., gained possession of the Château Trompette, he could have made himself Duke de Guienne. A fact like this is well calculated to rivet itself upon the memory."

At this moment the usher scratched upon the door, and entered to announce that the Marquis d'Ancre desired admission to the presence of the Queen; but the ministers had scarcely had time to exchange one glance of alarm and annoyance before Marie, with considerable vehemence, repeated her former order; and the mortified marquis was compelled to retire.

Cautiously as the audience had been accorded, the Italian had not failed to ascertain through his spies the presence of the ministers in the palace; and aware of his own danger should they regain their legitimate influence over the mind of the Queen, he unhesitatingly resolved to brave her interdict in order to counteract the effect of their representations. He had, however, as we have shown, signally failed; and with the most gloomy forebodings of impending evil, he returned to the apartments of his wife to report the ill-success of his attempt.

Nor was Concini the only visitor who sought admission to the Queen during her conference with the ministers. M. de Condé, who was still unaware of the moral revolution which had been effected, had, as was his custom, proceeded to the Louvre in order to consult with her on state affairs; and had been panic-struck when denied admission to her presence, and informed that she was then closeted with his mortal enemies. In his consternation he sought a solution of the mystery from Bassompierre, who, after expressing his utter ignorance of its meaning, cunningly insinuated that it was, in all probability, an intrigue of the Maréchal de Bouillon, who had effected a reconciliation with the Regent and her ministers at his expense; a suggestion which appeared so probable to the Prince that he immediately hurried to the apartments of Concini to discuss with him the necessary measures for averting this new danger.

Madame d'Ancre, who was well aware of the extent of her own power over the spirit of her foster-sister, would not permit herself to regard her present disgrace as more than a mere passing shadow, and urged her less confident husband to persevere in his attempt to regain the good graces of Marie; assuring him that the Queen would ere long be as anxious for a reconciliation as himself. Somewhat encouraged by this declaration, Concini, whose vanity was only rivalled by his ambition; and who, despite daily experience, believed his own society to be as indispensable to the Regent

as that of his wife, took measures to ascertain the precise moment at which the ministerial audience terminated; when, profiting by the opportunity, he threw himself upon his knees before the justly-offended Queen, and entreated her forgiveness of his involuntary offence. Marie was, however, in no mood for trifling, and she sternly bade him leave her; a command which he obeyed only to wreak upon his wife the consequences of his own mortification.*

The son of the Baron de Luz, finding that, despite her promise, the Regent had taken no measures to avenge the death of his father; but that, on the contrary, she had stopped the proceedings which previously to her reconciliation with the Duke de Guise had been commenced against his brother, determined to demand satisfaction in his own person; and he accordingly dispatched a challenge to the chevalier, which was immediately accepted by the hot-headed young noble. Seconds were appointed, and in compliance with the barbarous custom of the time, the four combatants fought on horseback at the Porte St. Antoine. At the first pass François de Guise was wounded; but at the third his sword pierced the body of his antagonist, who fell from his saddle, and expired a few minutes afterwards. Notwithstanding this tragical result, however, the murderer

* Bassompierre, Mém., pp. 81—87. Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 174—178. Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 207—209. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 42, 43.

alike of the father and the son, boldly returned to Paris, where he was visited and congratulated by numbers of the nobles; who, instead of shrinking from all contact with a man who had desolated the hearth and home of a sorrowing and now childless widow, were loud in their encomiums on his bravery and skill. Nor was this the most revolting feature of the case; for it is on record that Marie de Medicis herself, in her eagerness to retain the alliance of his family, no sooner learnt that the chevalier had received a wound in the encounter, than she dispatched an officer of her household to convey to him her regret, and to inquire into the extent of his hurt; overlooking, with extraordinary inconsistency, or still more reprehensible recklessness, the fact that only a few weeks previously, she had instructed the Parliament to put him upon his trial for the murder of his first victim.

The unslumbering eye of Heaven, however, and the unerring fiat of divine justice, proved less oblivious of this monstrous crime. In the course of the following year, while at the fortress of Baux near Arles, François de Guise was in the act of firing off a cannon, which burst and wounded him in so frightful a manner that he expired two hours subsequently in extreme torture; thus partially expiating by a death of agony a youth of misrule and bloodshed.*

* Mercure Français, 1614.

The murder of the younger de Luz had no sooner reached the ears of M. de Luynes, than he resolved to avail himself of the circumstance to awaken the ambition of Louis, and to induce him to fling off the shackles of maternal authority. Eager as he had long been for an opportunity of effecting this object, his attempts had hitherto been negatived by the ceaseless energy with which Marie de Medicis had smothered in their germ all attempts at sedition, thus rendering herself essential to the well-being and security of the kingdom; and he accordingly felt all the importance of the present crisis.

Under this impression, after listening attentively to the narrative of his informant, he hastened to the apartment of the King, who was still engaged in the cares of his morning toilette; and no contrast could have been more striking than the simple costume of the young sovereign and the elaborate dress of his favourite. The pourpoint of Louis was of deep crimson velvet, slashed with satin of the same colour, and totally without ornament, a simplicity which marked his own observance of the sumptuary edict that he had lately issued; whereas, de Luynes, with an arrogant disregard of the royal proclamation, was attired in a vest of pale blue, richly embroidered with gold, and relieved by a short mantle of amaranth, clasped by a rich jewel, similar to that which attached the snowy plume to his black velvet cap.

As the cap was doffed, however, and the long feather swept the tapestried floor, Louis forgot to chide this ostentatious defiance of his will, and with a smile motioned his splendid courtier to a seat.

"You come like a bridegroom from the wedding-feast, Albert;" he said cheerfully; "and you surely bring me a message of good import, or your garb belies you. Has de Brantes announced the speedy arrival of my sparrow-hawks?"

"Of one only, Sire; the smaller of the two died under his training."

"Ah!" exclaimed the King, with great petulance; "it is always so. Whatever is destined to give me pleasure, fails when I am the most eager to possess it."

"And yet;" interposed de Luynes gaily; "never, in so far as I can judge, did fortune show herself more favourable to your Majesty."

"What mean you?" asked Louis, roused for an instant from his usual apathy.

"Oh! it is a long tale, and a strange one;" said the favourite; "you may remember, Sire, the quarrel that arose between the old Baron de Luz and the Chevalier de Guise, and which grew out of the cabal against Concini. You cannot have forgotten, moreover, that the baron was killed. Well, his son Antoine de Luz, impatient for a vengeance which was too tardy according to the principle of his filial chivalry, took, as it

seems, the affair into his own hands, and flattered himself that where his father had failed, he should come forth victorious. Poor boy! he has paid dearly for his mistake. His sword has proved duller than his hopes. He has encountered the chevalier in his turn, and in his turn has bit the dust. François de Guise pierced him through and through one day last week near the Porte St. Antoine."

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Louis in an agitated voice; "do you mean that he is dead?"

"Dead, like his father;" was the unmoved reply. "And her Majesty the Queen-Regent, was no sooner informed of the fact, than she commanded M. de Bassompierre to arrest the chevalier."

"I will not permit it!" cried the young King vehemently; "I love François de Guise; he is one of my firmest friends; he shall not be imprisoned."

"Calm yourself, Sire;" said de Luynes with a significant smile; "Madame la Régente was soon appeased; and so little does she resent the crime of M. de Guise, that she has this morning condescended to cause inquiries to be made after his health."

"Right, right;" murmured Louis; "and yet it is a bad precedent, and a dangerous example to the lesser nobles. I hate this spilling of blood. The princes are too bold. Upon what will they next venture?"

"Nay, it requires no sphynx to solve that problem,

my gracious master;" said the favourite, toying with his plumed cap; "they will endeavour to effect the exile of Concini and his dark-browed wife: your good subjects have no love for foreigners, and believe that you, their sovereign, would find no want of faithful and devoted servitors among themselves. Then Jeannin, Sire, and Sillery, are obnoxious to them; and they trust, with your good help, to be ere long freed from all these incubi."

"Luynes;" said Louis in a tone of weariness; "I hate to hear you talk upon such subjects. I have more than enough of them from others. Is de Guise recovering from his wound? for he must also have suffered in the fray, or the Queen-mother would not have sought tidings of him."

"Fear not for him, Sire;" said the favourite; "he will be quite able to keep the saddle when M. de Condé heads an army to snatch the crown of our fair France from your own brow."

"Silence, Sir!" exclaimed the young King with sudden dignity. "Have *you* also forgotten that I am the son of Henry IV.?"

"May your Majesty never forget it more than I do;" said de Luynes, with an audacity before which the eye of Louis sank; "but believe me that the fact will avail you little until you have purged the nation of the foreign fungus which is corroding the root of your authority."

"Albert," murmured the weak young monarch; "in the name of Heaven, what would you ask?"

"To see you in reality the King of France, Sire."

"And for this purpose—"

"You must appease the princes. They are weary of the despotic rule of the Queen-mother, and of the influence of these Florentines."

"I dare not urge the Queen to banish them."

"Nor should you, Sire. It is for subjects to solicit, and for sovereigns to command. There is, moreover, a safer cure than exile for such an evil."

"Nay, now, de Luynes, you jest;" said Louis, striving to force a sickly smile; "you surely would not counsel—"

"Your Majesty mistakes me;" interposed the favourite; "I would dare anything to secure your safety. Justice holds her sword as firmly as her balance: and wields the one as freely as she weighs the other."

"Enough, enough;" gasped out Louis; "we will talk of this again—but blood, blood, always blood! It is sickening.—You will attend me to Fontainebleau, Albert; I must have some sport to-day, and endeavour to forget for a time all your moody arguments."

De Luynes bowed low, as he glanced significantly towards Roger, the favourite valet of the King, who

replied to the meaning look by an almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders, as he adjusted the mantle of his royal master.

"Go, Monsieur le Grand Fauconier;" pursued the King; "and see that all is prepared. I will follow on the instant."

Ten minutes subsequently the court of the Louvre was thronged with courtiers, equipages, and led horses; and within a quarter of an hour the voice of the usher was heard at the foot of the great staircase announcing "The King." Then Louis himself appeared, and taking his place in the coach which was awaiting him, he motioned de Luynes to his side, gave the signal of departure, and left the palace at a rapid pace. The royal suite mounted in haste; and ere long, nobles, pages, and equerries had disappeared, and all was once more silent beneath the deep shadows of the regal pile.

It is evident that, crafty as Bassompierre had shown himself when conversing with M. de Condé on the subject of the extraordinary changes which had taken place at court, he was nevertheless suspected by the Prince of having contributed to effect them; as a short time subsequently a banquet was given at the Hôtel de Condé, to which every nobleman in office was invited save the handsome and popular gentleman of the bed-chamber, who was generally one of the most coveted guests at entertainments of that description; but the

exclusion, marked as it was, failed to cause any mortification to Bassompierre, who had no sooner communicated the circumstance to the Regent than she commanded his attendance in her private saloon, where he passed the afternoon at cards with herself and her ladies.

Concini, finding that the Queen did not relax in her coldness towards himself and his wife, withdrew in great displeasure to Amiens; and at the same period Marie discovered that, despite his promise to the contrary, the Duke de Vendôme had joined the faction of Condé, and that they were conjointly endeavouring to win back M. de Guise. Alarmed by this new cabal, and made aware that the latter had betrayed symptoms of irresolution which augured ill for his adhesion to her cause, she lost no time in reminding him of the pledges which he had given, and in entreating him not to abandon her interests. The duke, flattered by the importance that the Queen-mother attached to his allegiance, readily promised all she wished; and she had reason to congratulate herself upon her promptitude, as only a few days subsequently M. de Vendôme and Concini arrived at Fontainebleau, where the court had recently established its residence, when the former hastened to take leave of their Majesties previously to his departure for Brittany, where he was about to preside the Assembly of the States, and the latter on the pretext of bearing him company; but in reality to induce Zamet, who possessed considerable authority in the

palace, to assign rooms to them in that portion of the building occupied by the Duke de Guise.

Such an arrangement could not, however, be effected without reaching the ears of the Regent, whose suspicions of their motive were immediately excited; and she desired Bassompierre not to lose sight of M. de Guise until he had retired to rest, and to prevent his holding any communication with the Duke de Vendôme. Resolved, moreover, to ascertain the correctness of those suspicions, she directed M. de Schneterre to watch throughout the night upon the staircase of the Duke de Guise; a vigilance which was rewarded by his discovery of the two nobles, who, shortly after Bassompierre had withdrawn, paid a visit to the duke which lasted upwards of two hours. The astonishment of the Regent was consequently by no means great, when M. de Guise in his turn waited upon her Majesty to take leave; upon the pretext that he had been chosen by Madame d'Elbœuf, conjointly with the Duke de Mayenne, as her arbitrator a reconciliation which was about to be attempted between herself and Madame de la Trémouille, who had on her side selected the Prince de Condé and the Maréchal de Bouillon. Marie, however, refused to consent to his departure, and informed him that she would dispatch Bassompierre as his substitute; an arrangement with which he was compelled to comply, but which greatly embarrassed his friends.

Meanwhile the anger of the Queen against Concini had been seriously increased by this new instance of

ingratitude; and even the pleadings of his wife, who had been restored to favour, failed to appease her displeasure. In imparting her commands to Bassompierre, Marie had inveighed bitterly against the attitude assumed by a man who owed everything to her indulgence; and as her listener endeavoured to excuse him, she said vehemently:

"Urge nothing in his behalf. He has thought proper to judge for himself, and to join a cabal which he knows to be opposed to my authority. Tell him from me that if he does not return here by Thursday evening, I will teach him in future to obey me; and that had it not been from consideration for his wife, I should already have provided him with a lodging which he would have found it difficult to quit. Leonora is indignant at his conduct; while he continues to act more disgracefully from day to day. Inform him that he will do well not to neglect my orders."

The arrogant Italian was, however, by no means inclined to obedience; nor was it without considerable difficulty that Bassompierre succeeded in impressing upon him the extent of the danger to which he exposed himself by the line of conduct he had so recklessly adopted, and in ultimately effecting his reconciliation with his justly offended mistress.*

This was no sooner accomplished than the ministers, who thenceforward despaired of ever permanently counterbalancing the influence of Concini and his wife,

* Bassompierre, Mém., pp. 88, 89.

determined, if possible, to unite their interests to his; and for this purpose the President Jeannin, who had maintained a better understanding with the marquis than any of his colleagues, proposed to the Queen that an effort should be made to reconcile the chancellor and Villeroy with her favourite, a suggestion which she eagerly adopted, being anxious to strengthen her own party by weakening that of the Princes. She had been apprised that the Maréchal de Bouillon, who was indignant that he could not attain to the degree of power which he had anticipated under a regency, was perseveringly employed in endeavouring to detach the Duke de Guise from her interests, and to fortify the cabal of the Prince de Condé, in order to render his own allegiance indispensable to the crown; and she consequently welcomed any method of circumventing a conspiracy which was becoming formidable. It was therefore determined that a marriage should be proposed between the daughter of Concini and the Marquis de Villeroy, the grandson of the secretary of state; and this overture was accompanied by the most lavish promises on the part of the ministers that they would serve him by every means in their power, and exert all their energies to advance his fortunes.

This negociation, which was undertaken without the knowledge of Bassompierre, had nearly proved fatal to his prospects; as both parties, dreading his influence with the Regent, determined to undermine him in her regard; and for this purpose they so wilfully mis-

represented his actions, and contrived to invest them with so suspicious an appearance, that Marie, who had began to misdoubt every one about her, treated him with a harshness which his proud spirit could not brook; and he accordingly made preparations for quitting the court of France, with the intention of entering the service of some foreign prince.

His design was no sooner ascertained, however, than his friends, particularly the Duke de Guise and the Princess de Conti, hastened to represent to the Queen the impolicy of forfeiting the friendship and assistance of one who had so faithfully espoused her cause; and their representations prevailed. Bassompierre was permitted to justify himself, and Marie frankly admitted her conviction that she had been misled by his enemies.

In addition to these intestinal intrigues, the Regent was occupied by the troubles generated by the disputed succession of the duchy of Mantua, regarding which she was reluctant to come to any resolution without securing the advice of the princes and great nobles; upon which she was moreover the more anxious to insist, as it would afford an opportunity of summoning to the capital not only M. de Condé himself, but all the other leaders of the adverse faction; who had, as we have shown, withdrawn from the court, and were exasperated by the reconciliation of the Regent with the Dukes of Guise and Epernon, and the recal of the ministers. The council accordingly met; and as the Cardinal-Duke of Mantua was a near relative of the Queen, it was decided that

France should support him in his pretensions against the Duke of Savoy. An army was consequently organised, which was to march on Monferrat from three several points. One division under the Maréchal de Lesdiguières, a second under the Duke de Guise, and the third under the Grand-Equerry M. de Bellegarde. The troops were not, however, destined on this occasion to pass the frontier, the friends of the Duke of Savoy having soon succeeded in convincing Marie de Medicis of the danger of investing three great nobles with the command of an armed force of such importance during the minority of the sovereign; while Ubaldini, the papal nuncio, jealous of the presence of the French soldiery in Italy, and apprehensive that Lesdiguières would be accompanied by a strong number of Huguenots, was equally strenuous in dissuading her from her purpose; assuring her that the King of Spain had resolved to oppose the Duke of Savoy, and to compel him to restore to the house of Mantua the territories which had been wrested from it in Monferrat. The Duke of Savoy himself, moreover, alarmed by the demonstration about to be made in France, and conscious that he was unable to compete with such an adversary, resolved to open a negociation; upon which the Marquis de Cœuvres was dispatched to Italy to arrange the terms of the treaty.*

While the whole of the other European princes were

* Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 191, 192.

occupied with the succession in Mantua, James of England was engrossed by his anxiety to divert the minds of his subjects from the grief which was universally felt at the untimely death of his eldest son; and so little did he himself feel the bereavement that he entered with apparent enjoyment into every species of entertainment which presented itself. The unfortunate Prince had expired on the 6th of November; and as his demise threatened to prevent that close alliance with France which he had so eagerly anticipated, James caused its announcement to the Regent to be accompanied by an offer of the hand of his other son, Charles, who had thus become Prince of Wales, to the Princess Christine; a proposal which reached the French court only three days subsequently to the decease of Henry, and which consequently created considerable surprise.* Marie de Medicis, however, felt no inclination to quarrel with this indecent haste, as she trusted that by giving her daughter to the son of a Protestant sovereign, she should conciliate the Huguenots, whom she had greatly alienated by concluding the double alliance with Spain; but the Sovereign-Pontiff was no sooner apprised of the offer of James, and of the gracious reception afforded to it by the Regent, than he expressed his extreme displeasure, and refused to listen to any arguments, declaring that all questions of policy should be made subservient to a compact whose observance must prove

* Lingard, Hist. of England, vol. ix, p. 271.

detrimental to the interests of the Church. Ubaldini, the papal nuncio at the French court, seconded these remonstrances with more zeal than judgment; and at length proceeded so far as to reproach the Queen with the ill return which she was about to make to God for the blessings He had vouchsafed to her. The high spirit of Marie de Medicis could brook no more; and her reply is worthy of record. "Monseigneur," she said with dignity; "I do nothing more upon this occasion than several princes of Italy have done before me, and that too under the very eyes of the Pope. The Grand-Duchess of Tuscany, with all her devotion, did not refuse her consent when she was formerly asked to give the hand of her daughter to the Prince of Wales."*

Thus, the proposal was accepted, and the heir to the British throne was thenceforward considered as the future husband of the young Princess.

At this period the death of M. de Fervaques left a marshal's *bâton* disposable, which, to the extreme disgust of the nobility, was bestowed by the Regent upon Concini, who had never throughout his life been present at the firing of a hostile shot. The ill-judged manner in which this dignity was conferred is so characteristic that it merits mention. Her temporary estrangement from Madame d'Ancre had been a source of great discomfort as well as sorrow to the Queen; and her ladies, hoping still further to disgust her with

* Siri, Mém. Recon., vol. iii, pp. 50—52.

the favourite, had unwittingly compelled her to feel her dependence upon the disgraced mistress of the robes. To every petty requirement she was answered that it was not within their province, and that reference must be made to the marquise.

"I desire to have the entrance to my closet draperied by a screen of crimson velvet edged with gold;" said the Regent on one occasion to Madame de Guercheville: "be good enough to have it done immediately."

"Your Majesty has probably overlooked the fact that such orders must be issued by the Marquise d'Ancre;" was the formal reply of the stately lady of honour.

"Madame du Fargis;" resumed the Queen, a short time afterwards; "I have mislaid a letter—a petition—bearing the name of the Countess de Tourraine: I wish it to be found, and answered."

"Madam;" responded the beautiful countess meekly; "the Marquise d'Ancre has charge of all the petitions addressed to your Majesty."

Marie de Medicis turned away in silence. She had striven to believe that she could dispense with the services of Leonora; but every day, and almost every hour, she became more convinced of her utter helplessness without her. Madame d'Ancre had been the playmate of her infancy, the friend of her girlhood; she was the confidant of her most hidden thoughts, her counsellor in difficulty, and her consoler in her moments of trial. The ill-advised bearing of those about her sufficed to remind her of these facts, and

her resolution was forthwith formed. Concini might still be made to feel and to suffer for his fault, but she could not dispense with the society and support of Leonora.

The Queen retired to her private closet, and the mistress of the robes was summoned to her presence by a page. As she entered, Marie was startled by the change which had taken place in her appearance; her eyes were swollen with weeping, and her cheek was even more sallow than its wont. Whatever might be her faults, there can be no doubt that Leonora was deeply and tenderly attached to her royal foster-sister; and that the disgrace into which she had fallen had consequently affected her to an intense degree. She was no longer the proud and imperious favourite who through the Regent sought to govern France, but a weak and sorrowing woman, mourning over the ruin of all her hopes.

The apartment to which the Queen-mother had so unexpectedly summoned her foster-sister, was, as we have said, her private closet, in which she passed several hours each day while residing at the Louvre. The walls were covered to the height of ten feet from the floor by magnificent hangings of crimson damask, surmounted by a dome of pale blue silk, upon which were elaborately embroidered the arms of the Medici. From the centre of this dome hung a silver lamp, chiselled by the hand of Benvenuto Cellini, and suspended by a chain of the same metal; a table of carved

oak stood in the centre of the room, upon which were placed a pair of globes, sundry astronomical instruments, an illuminated missal, and a flask of Hungary water; while a low divan, heaped with cushions of black velvet sprinkled with *fleurs-de-lis* in gold, occupied two entire sides of the apartment, and completed its furniture.

"Approach, Leonora;" said the Queen. "Here, place yourself on this cushion at my feet, and wipe the tears from your eyes. Even if we part, we may do so without bitterness."

"Ha, Madam!" exclaimed the Florentine; "should such a feeling indeed exist it can be only in the bosom of your Majesty, for no true subject can do otherwise than love and venerate her sovereign."

"Would that it were so;" said Marie; "but that is a delusion under which I have long ceased to labour; for too often where I have sought to excite affection I have only engendered hatred."

"I know not if your Majesty would address that reproach to me;" said Madame d'Ancre, raising her drooping head with the sudden energy of honest pride; "but should it really be so, I can summon the past to vindicate my good-faith. I can call upon the Queen-Regent of France herself to do me justice; I can invoke the two years of that regency so full of trial, of struggle, and of calamity, during which I have at times perilled my head to ensure alike the tranquillity and the triumph of my august mistress; I can quote the several cabals which I have helped to crush; and, above all, I can

prove the fidelity and submission with which I have constantly obeyed the behests of my sovereign-lady. All this is, however, worse than idle; the servant only sins the more in every attempt at self-justification. Monarchs are accustomed from their cradles to punish upon suspicion, however strong may be the evidences of the past. Gratitude, as the term is understood between man and man, never drapes itself in purple; perfect confidence cannot steady its foot upon the steps of a throne, for the royal canopy is a heaven of impunity for those whom it overshadows.—Yet think not, Madam," she continued in a more subdued voice, as she clasped her thin fingers together so forcibly that they became ashy white beneath the pressure; "think not, I beseech you, that I say this of myself. I have no such presumption. I have not forgotten what I was, in feeling what I am. I yet remember, deeply, thankfully, that I was poor, obscure, and insignificant, and that it was your royal hand which raised me to rank and honour; and thus it is with the most fervent gratitude that I now thank you for your past bounties; and with the utmost humility that I prepare to take my leave of you for ever."

Marie did not reply: the outburst of outraged feeling in which the marquise had indulged was so unexpected and so bold that she remained speechless, and the tears which had risen to her eyes on the entrance of her foster-sister congealed upon their lids. Leonora awaited for an instant some token of relenting in her royal mistress, but as the threatening silence continued, she

became alarmed, and casting herself upon her knees, she gasped out falteringly: "I am at your feet, Madam; I kneel before you, wretched and repentant; I am here to bid you farewell—a life-long farewell. Pardon, and forget me."

The heart of Marie was moved; and as her favourite knelt before her she pressed her to her bosom, and bade her be of good cheer, for that all was forgiven. Leonora, unprepared for such an admission, wept abundantly; and it was long ere she could recover her composure, while the Queen on her side was scarcely less distressed.

"I cannot part from you, *mia cara, mia dolce;*" pursued Marie passionately; "you are my good angel, the friend and sister of my happy years—for we were happy then, *Leonora mia*, before a crown and a court came between us.—You have said truly that you have been my guardian-spirit, and we do not part with our best security in the hour of peril. No, Leonora, no; I will listen no more to the evil accusations of those who would fain separate us. You shall not quit the Louvre."

Madame d'Ancre pressed her hand forcibly upon her heart as if to control its tumultuous throbbings; and then, fixing her large dark eyes earnestly upon those of her royal mistress, she said in a low deep accent of earnest emotion: "And thus you love me still—you, the proud daughter of the Medici, the wife and the mother of kings—you love me still, and I have not lived in vain! Did you hear those words, countess?" she asked, suddenly springing to her feet, and addressing Madame

du Fargis, who was standing in the recess of one of the tall windows, with the tears falling fast over her fair cheeks; "the Regent will not suffer me to leave France —the Regent will not allow me to wither away my life an alien from her presence. Now I am once more calm and strong—calm in the security of my happiness, strong in the consciousness of my honesty. Let them accuse me now, I defy their malice, for my royal mistress believes in me, and loves me."

"Compose yourself, Leonora;" said the Queen-mother affectionately; "your feeble frame is unequal to these bursts of passion. Come hither, child, and pillow your aching head upon my knees, as you were wont to do long, long ago, when we sang together the beloved songs of our fair Florence, or indulged in day-dreams which were never destined to be realised. Let Madame de Conti beware in her turn: higher heads than hers have been brought low: and from this day I will teach a bitter lesson to her and to her kinsmen. I have borne much, but I am still a Medicis; I can be as firm as Catherine, although I shall endeavour to act with greater justice, and to be in all things worthy of the name I bear."

"Ha, Madam!" exclaimed the favourite; "you have already proved that however others may endeavour to forget that you are the widow of Henry the Great the fact is ever present to yourself." And as she spoke, Leonora buried her face in the lap of her royal foster-sister, while her long black hair, which had become

unfastened by the energy of her movements, fell to the floor and covered her like a pall.

Little did either the Queen or the marquise at that moment anticipate how soon a deeper and a denser pall would replace those luxuriant and gleaming tresses! Happy was it for both that no prophetic glance into the future darkened the happiness of that bright hour of reconciliation!

Meanwhile the Princess de Conti, who dreaded the effect of this same reconciliation upon herself and her family, privately dispatched a messenger to the Prince de Condé to inform him that Madame d'Ancre was at that moment closeted with the Regent, and that he must forthwith devise some method of terminating so dangerous a conference. M. de Condé was for a moment aghast; and on reflection could adopt no better expedient than that of prevailing upon M. de Brèves, the governor of the Duke d'Orleans, to suggest to the young Prince that he should proceed to the apartments of his royal mother, in order to pay his respects to her Majesty. Monsieur obeyed; and Leonora was still seated on a cushion at the feet of her foster-sister, with her pale face pillowed upon her knees, when Madame de Conti threw open the door of the cabinet, and announced the Prince.

"Let Monseigneur await my pleasure without;" exclaimed Marie angrily. "I understand the motive of this breach of etiquette, and shall reward it as it deserves. *Leonora cara;*" she added, as the drapery again closed over the portal; "dry your tears, I owe you some recom-

pense for all that you have suffered, and I will not be tardy in my requital."

At this instant some one scratched upon the door of the royal closet.

"Again!" cried the Queen indignantly. "See who waits, Madame du Fargis."

The countess proceeded to draw aside the tapestry; "Madam," she said, as she retired a pace or two with a profound curtsey; "His Majesty the King."

"Ha!" exclaimed the Regent, starting from her seat, and advancing towards the young sovereign, whom she tenderly embraced; "your visit could not have been more welcome or better-timed, my son. The death of M. de Fervaques has created a vacancy which must be at once filled, and I have a marshal's commission for you to sign."

The wife of Concini gazed eagerly into the face of her royal mistress. Marie smiled. "Go, Madam;" she said affectionately; "and bid the Marquis d'Ancre hasten here upon the instant to kiss the gracious hand from which he is about to receive a marshal's *bâton*."

Leonora knelt before the startled King, who suffered her in silence to perform the same ceremony; and then radiant with happiness she pressed the jewelled fingers of the Queen to her quivering lips. "And hark you, Leonora;" pursued Marie; "cause Concini to be announced by his new title when he seeks admission here. This will at once put an end to a host of rivalries which are now unavailing."

Madame d'Ancre hastily withdrew; but as she passed through the apartments of the Queen she remarked that the waiting-room was already thronged by a crowd of courtiers, who had been attracted thither by curiosity; while they, in their turn, did not fail to detect in the flushed cheek and flashing eye of the marquise, the indications of some new triumph. Little, however, were they prepared for its extent; and when Concini some minutes afterwards appeared, with a sarcastic smile upon his lips, and glanced a look of defiance around him, even while he bowed right and left alike to his friends and to his enemies, every pulse quickened with anxiety. The suspense was but momentary. The Italian was preceded by one of the royal pages, who, as the captain of the guard flung back the door of the cabinet in which Louis XIII. was still closeted with his mother, announced in a voice so audible that it was heard throughout the apartment: "Monseigneur le Maréchal d'Ancre."

"Concini, a Marshal of France!" exclaimed simultaneously the Dukes of Guise, Epernon, and Bellegarde, who were standing together; and then there was a dead silence as the draperied door closed upon the exulting favourite.

CHAPTER VI.

[1614.]

NEW ANXIETIES — DISAFFECTION OF THE PRINCES — THEY DEMAND A REFORMATION IN THE GOVERNMENT — CUNNING OF THE DUKE DE BOUILLON—IMPRISONMENT OF M. DE VENDÔME—HE ESCAPES — THE REGENT SUSPECTS THE SINCERITY OF BOUILLON—CONSPIRACY OF THE DUKES OF VENDÔME AND RETZ — THE DUKE DE NEVERS SEIZES MEZIÈRES—RECAL OF M. D'EPERNON—MARIE DE MEDICIS RESOLVES TO RESIGN THE REGENCY, BUT IS DISSUADED BY HER COUNCIL—TREASONABLE REPORTS—PRECARIOUS POSITION OF THE QUEEN—LEVY OF TROOPS—MANIFESTO OF THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ—REPLY OF THE REGENT — DEATH OF THE CONSTABLE-DUKE DE MONTMORENCY — BASSOMPIERRE IS APPOINTED COLONEL-GENERAL OF THE SWISS GUARDS —THEY MARCH AGAINST M. DE CONDÉ—MARIE ENDEAVOURS TO TEMPORISE—THE PRICE OF LOYALTY—THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ LEAVES PARIS — CHRISTENING OF THE DUKE D'ANJOU AND THE PRINCESS HENRIETTA MARIA—A TEMPORARY CALM—THE DUKES OF VENDÔME AND RETZ EXCITE THE BURGUNDIANS TO REVOLT—THE PROTESTANTS REFUSE TO JOIN THEIR FACTION—THEY ARE COMPELLED TO LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS—THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ MARCHES UPON POITIERS—THE CHURCH "MILITARY"—THE PRELATE AND THE POPULACE—A GOVERNOR SUPERSEDED—THE PRINCE IS COMPELLED TO WITHDRAW TO CHATELLERAULT — HE BURNS DOWN THE EPISCOPAL PALACE — THE COURT PROCEED TO POITOU—THEIR RECEPTION—THE DUKE DE VENDÔME MAKES HIS SUBMISSION — THE STATES ASSEMBLE AT NANTES — ENORMITIES PERPETRATED BY THE TROOPS OF M. DE VENDÔME—FUTILITY OF THAT PRINCE — DEATH OF THE PRINCE DE CONTI — A BACHELOR-BENEDICT — A "NOM-DE-GUERRE"—MAJORITY OF LOUIS XIII. —THE BED OF JUSTICE—THE ASSEMBLY OF THE STATES-GENERAL IS DEFERRED—THE KING SOLICITS HIS MOTHER TO RETAIN HER AUTHORITY IN THE GOVERNMENT —MEETING OF THE STATES—THE EARLY YEARS OF LOUIS XIII.—CHARLES ALBERT DE LUYNES—HIS ANTECEDENTS—HIS AMBITION—HIS FAVOUR WITH THE YOUNG KING—HE IS MADE GOVERNOR OF AMBOISE.

CHAPTER VI.

[1614.]

THE commencement of the year 1614 was productive of new anxieties to the Queen-Regent. The Maréchal de Bouillon, whose restless ambition was ever prompting him to some new enterprise, had warily, but not the less surely, possessed himself of the confidence of the princes and the other disaffected nobles, and had succeeded in aggravating their feelings against the court party to such an extent that he experienced little difficulty in inducing them to abandon the capital and to retire to their several governments. M. de Condé had never forgiven the refusal of Marie to bestow upon him the command of the citadel of Château Trompette, or the recal of the ministers; and he also deeply resented the desertion of the Maréchal d'Ancre from his interests, as well as the wealth and honours to which he had attained; while the Dukes of Nevers, Mayenne, Vendôme, Longueville, and Piney-Luxembourg, together with a host of others,

considered themselves aggrieved by their exclusion from power, and were consequently ready to espouse his cause. Thus Bouillon found it easy to induce them to retire simultaneously from the court; and it was agreed that they should assemble at Champagne, and collectively demand a reform in the government.

Accordingly the Prince de Condé took his leave of their Majesties on the 6th of January, and retired for a time to Châteauroux, whence he afterwards proceeded to Mezières. This example was shortly followed by the other chiefs of his faction. The Duke de Nevers retired at once to Champagne, the Duke de Mayenne to the Isle of France, and M. de Longueville to Picardy. In February, the Duke de Vendôme prepared in his turn to join his friends; but as their purpose had by this time become apparent to the Regent, she caused him to be confined in an apartment of the Louvre; whence, however, he succeeded a short time afterwards in escaping by a door that had long been unused, and which being covered by the tapestried hanging of the chamber, had been at length forgotten.

The Maréchal de Bouillon, however, upon whom the cabal mainly relied, as his sovereignty of Sedan gave them the assurance of a secure retreat should they be menaced with reprisals, made no haste to imitate his dupes. He had been far too crafty to compromise himself beyond redemption with a party which might ultimately fail; and he had consequently calculated with great care the probable chances of furthering his own

fortunes. After the departure of the princes he formed his decision; and his first act was to wait upon the ministers, and to reveal to them the intentions of M. de Condé and his adherents; a communication which excited more annoyance than surprise in those to whom it was addressed. He then proceeded to the Louvre, where he repeated to the Regent what he had previously declared to her ministers; and although he tempered his information with assurances of the respect and attachment of the self-exiled princes towards her person, Marie considered the mere fact of such a coalition so dangerous, that even when Bouillon volunteered to exert all his influence to induce them to abandon their design, and to return to the capital, although she accepted his offer, and permitted him to follow them ostensibly for that purpose, she was far from feeling reassured; and she soon had reason to discover that her fears were only too well-grounded; as the duke, after an elaborate leave-taking at the palace, publicly declared that he was about to proceed to Sedan in order to avoid arrest.

This fact, coupled with the escape of M. de Vendôme, who lost no time in reaching Brittany, where he was joined by the Duke de Retz* with an armed force, and took the town of Lamballe, sufficed to convince Marie

* Emmanuel de Gondy, Duke de Retz, and general of the galleys, was the grandson of the celebrated Marshal Gilles de Laval, Baron de Retz, who, under Charles VII., greatly contributed to the expulsion of the English from France, but who subsequently suffered strangulation, by a decree of the eccle-

that no faith must be placed upon the professions of Bouillon; and she accordingly forwarded orders to all the governors of the royal fortresses to forbid the entrance of the Duke de Vendôme within their walls, and commanded the Parliament to issue an edict for the suppression of levies of troops throughout Provence. This done, she next dispatched the Duke de Ventadour to Chateauroux with letters of recal to M. de Condé; but before his arrival the Prince had left that city for Mezières; and as the letters which were forwarded to him remained unanswered, the royal envoy was compelled to return to the capital without accomplishing his mission.

The next intelligence which reached the capital was the seizure of the citadel of Mezières by the Duke de Nevers; and as matters daily assumed a more serious aspect, the Queen resolved to recal M. d'Epernon from Metz, where he had withdrawn a few months previously, and to conciliate him by reviving in the person of his son M. de Candale, the nominal office of first lord of the bedchamber, which he had himself held under Henry III.; while, at the same time, she held out to the Duke de Guise the prospect of commanding the armies of the King, should it be found expedient to march against the Prince de Condé.

These precautions were, however, far from sufficient

siastical tribunal of Nantes, for his frightful debaucheries. He was the father of the well-known Cardinal de Retz, the enemy of Mazarin, and one of the heroes of the Fronde.

to tranquillise the mind of Marie de Medicis, who began to apprehend a renewal of the intestinal calamities which had overwhelmed the nation during the preceding reigns; and, satisfied that despite all her efforts at conciliation, she was personally obnoxious to the princes, she expressed her determination to resign the regency; nor did either Concini or his wife, although their own fortunes were involved in her retirement, venture to dissuade her from her purpose, the threats of the disaffected nobles against themselves having convinced them that they had little mercy to expect at their hands should they still further urge the Queen to aggressive measures. From this hasty resolution Marie was, however, with some difficulty, dissuaded by her council, who represented to her the dangerous position in which she could not fail to place the young King; who, utterly unaccustomed to public business, must prove incompetent to maintain his interests at so critical a crisis as that which now excited her own fears.

The Regent readily admitted the validity of this argument; but, in support of her purpose, she informed them that she had just been apprised of a rumour which had spread in Brittany since the Duke de Vendôme had retired from the court, by which she was accused of having attempted to poison the King, in order to lengthen her own period of power; and with pardonable indignation she declared that she possessed no other means of refuting so horrible a

calumny than that which she had adopted, and that she consequently owed this justice to herself. As she was, however, still entreated to sacrifice her own feelings to the safety of the sovereign and the welfare of the kingdom, she at length yielded; but that she made the concession with reluctance was sufficiently evident.

"As regards the horrible crime imputed to me, Messieurs;" she said; "I can only swear that I would rather suffer death than continue to live on under such an accusation. I am well aware, moreover, that this is not the only calumny which has been circulated against my person and reputation; nor is it the first time that the Maréchal d'Ancre has been designated as the instigator of my unpopular measures; every new cabal inventing some fallacy to undermine my authority and to throw discredit upon my government. Since, however, you give it as your opinion that I shall better serve the King by retaining the regency until he shall be of fitting age to act upon his own responsibility, I will continue to exercise the power delegated to me by my late lord and husband; and to maintain that good understanding with my son which has ever hitherto existed between us."

The question was then discussed of whether it were more desirable to levy such troops as still remained faithful to the crown, and at once endeavour to reduce the faction of the princes by force, or to attempt a reconciliation by pacific means. The Cardinal de Joyeuse, Villeroy, and Jeannin were urgent

that the former measure should be adopted; assigning as their reason that after the tergiversation and deceit of which the cabal had been convicted, they would profit by any delay on the part of the government to strengthen their army, and to effect other means of defence, thus augmenting the difficulty of their suppression; the chancellor was, however, of a different opinion, and counselled the Queen to avert, so long as it might be possible to do so, the horrors of a civil war. He represented to her the fact that all the principal nobles, with scarcely one exception, had leagued themselves with M. de Condé, while she had on her side only the Dukes of Guise and Epernon, who were, moreover, at variance; each coveting the dignity of connétable, and scarcely seeking to disguise his jealousy of the other; and finally, he pointed out to her the dangerous attitude assumed by the Huguenots, who would not fail to take advantage of any civil dissension to advance their pretensions, which could only be done successfully during the minority of the sovereign.

Between these conflicting opinions Marie at length resolved to steer a middle course; and she consequently declared her intention to attempt by negociation to reconcile the princes, while at the same time she made a levy of six thousand Swiss troops.* She, moreover, by the advice of her council, addressed a circular-letter

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, p. 247—254. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 53—55.

to all the Parliaments of the kingdom, governors of provinces and fortresses, and mayors of towns, exhorting them to remain faithful to the crown, and not to suffer themselves to be seduced by the Prince de Condé and his partisans; and terminating by the declaration that her Majesty had determined to convoke the States, in order to consult upon the measures necessary to ensure the welfare and prosperity of the nation.

Meanwhile M. de Condé had assembled the leaders of his party at Mezières, whence he forwarded a species of manifesto to the Queen-Regent, in which he complained in the name of his faction of "the waste of the public money; of the unworthiness of the individuals in power; of the undue authority assumed by the ministers; of the want of respect displayed towards the princes of the blood, the peers, and the officers of the crown; of the obstacles endured by the Parliaments in the exercise of their jurisdiction; of the ruin of the great nobles, the excessive charges of the law-courts; the oppression suffered by the people; the neglect exhibited in assembling the States-General; and the precipitation shown in concluding the marriage of the sovereign before he had attained his majority." Other objections followed, and then succeeded the conditions upon which the cabal declared themselves willing to return to their allegiance. The States-General were to be convened within three months; the royal marriages were to be deferred until the close of the assembly;

and the then-existing household of his Majesty was to be replaced by individuals of acknowledged probity.

The Prince at the same time wrote to the two Parliaments, to the Prince de Conti, to the dukes and peers, and to the great officers of the crown, soliciting their assistance in the work of reform which he was about to undertake. Neither of the Parliaments, however, replied to his letter; and that addressed to Paris was placed unopened in the hands of the Regent, who forthwith forwarded it to the chancellor.

The answer of Marie de Medicis to the manifesto addressed to herself was calm and dignified. She declared her willingness to assemble the States-General; but accompanied this concession by expressing her regret that the Prince should not, during the last four years, have personally made the representation, and assisted her in averting the evils of which he now complained, instead of absenting himself from the court on the pretext of disapproving the proposed alliance with Spain, to which he had previously affixed his consent and signature. To each of his other objections he received an equally categorical reply; and the document terminated by an expression of her conviction that his offer to effect a reform in the state by pacific means rather than have recourse to force was desirable indeed, but little to be anticipated, since the formation of a cabal like that of which he had constituted himself the leader, and which was opposed to the legitimate authority of the sovereign, could only termi-

nate in intestine broil, and compel the King to adopt the most violent measures in order to suppress it.

Precisely at this period intelligence reached the court of the death of the veteran Connétable de Montmorency; one of the most gallant soldiers of his day, whose judgment and strong sense had long been proverbial, although he was utterly without education, and could scarcely sign his own name.

While the negociation with Condé was still pending, a new anxiety added to the embarrassment of the Regent. The Swiss levies were about to be raised; but suspicious of the loyalty of the Duke de Rohan, who was colonel-general of this force, rendered her unwilling to confide so important a body of troops to his control; and she ultimately resolved to offer him a sum of money, and to induce him to resign his appointment. M. de Rohan readily acceded to the proposal, his position at that moment rendering him indifferent to its possession; and the Queen next sought to find an individual whose popularity with the Switzers, and devotion to her own interests, might render him an eligible successor to the displaced duke. After considerable reflection she selected Bassompierre; but the suggestion was at once negatived by M. de Villeroy, who reminded her Majesty that the office was one which had never been filled by any person under the rank of a prince. So brilliant a prospect, however, gave the favoured courtier courage to plead his cause so successfully with his royal mistress, that

she was at length induced to consent, that, if he were enabled to induce the Swiss themselves to solicit his appointment, the difficulty should be overcome. Fortunately for the aspirant the officer to whom the levies were intrusted was his personal friend, and so zealously did he advocate his cause that the thirteen cantons united in consenting to receive him as their leader; and Bassompierre, although only a petty noble of Lorraine, found himself invested with a command which was coveted by all the proudest subjects of France.

Two days subsequently the court were apprised that the Prince de Condé and the Duke de Nevers had taken Mezières, and Sainte-Menehould; upon which the newly-raised troops received orders to join M. de Praslin, who, with the remainder of the army, was concentrating his force at Vitry. Their arrival so alarmed the insurgent party that they resolved to evacuate the latter city, and demanded that even should the troops remain in their vicinity, Bassompierre himself, who, from the share that he had taken in the affair throughout was peculiarly obnoxious to them, should be recalled. The Duke de Ventadour and the President Jeannin, through whom M. de Condé and his party carried on their negociation with the King, accordingly wrote to the young commander to apprise him that the Regent required his services in the capital, for reasons which she would explain on his arrival;

and, greatly to his mortification, Bassompierre found himself compelled to retrace his steps.*

Once more Marie de Medicis resolved to afford to the adverse faction the opportunity of terminating their ill-advised struggle without bloodshed; and she accordingly dispatched a trustworthy messenger to M. de Condé, volunteering to send deputies who should be authorised to effect a reconciliation. The offer was accepted, the malcontents having become paralysed by the unexpected energy of their opponents; and after sundry meetings between the agents of the government and the chiefs of the cabal, in which each made particular conditions for himself which were veiled by three demands of a more public nature, a treaty of peace was drawn up and signed by both parties, and amity was once more restored. Situated as they were the princes had been careful not to insist on more than they were aware would be readily conceded; and thus they asked only that the States-General should be convoked with as little delay as possible, that the double alliance with Spain should be delayed until the termination of the King's minority, and that the royal troops should be immediately disarmed.

To this last requisition the reply of the commissioners of the crown was positive; the rebel faction were in the first place to lay down their own arms, after which

* Bassompierre, Mém., pp. 94,95.

they pledged themselves that their example should be followed by the troops of the sovereign; and to this arrangement M. de Condé, after some hesitation, agreed.

Thus far all had progressed favourably; but the subsequent exactions of the disaffected party caused considerable anxiety in the council of the Regent. The exorbitant pretensions of its leaders alarmed the ministers, but the crisis was sufficiently critical to induce them ultimately to satisfy the demands of their dearly-purchased allies. The Prince de Condé was invested with the government of Amboise, and received four hundred and fifty thousand livres in ready money. The Duke de Mayenne three hundred thousand, and the survivorship of the government of Paris; and all the other chiefs of the cabal the sums or governments that they had seen fit to exact; after which they ceased to insist upon the public grievances, and the Dukes of Longueville and Mayenne returned to court; an example which was followed by the Prince de Condé as soon as he had taken possession of his new government. The coldness with which he was received, however, and the little desire evinced to pay him that deference which he was ever anxious to exact, soon disgusted him with the capital, and he once more withdrew, little less disaffected than ever.

On the 5th of June the Duke d'Anjou and the younger Princess were baptized at the Louvre with great ceremony, by the Cardinal de Bonzy, the almoner

of the Queen. The sponsors of the Prince, who received the names of Gaston Jean Baptiste, were the ex-Queen Marguerite, and the Cardinal de Joyeuse; while those given to his sister, who was held at the font by Madame and the Cardinal de la Rochefoucault, were Henrietta Maria; this being the Princess who subsequently became the wife of the unhappy Charles I. of England.

The completion of the treaty with the princes had restored the nation to apparent tranquillity, and the government of the Regent bore a semblance of stability to which it had not previously attained, when new troubles broke out through the restlessness and jealousy of César de Vendôme; who having merely been reinstated in his government and other dignities, considered himself to have been ill-treated by the Prince de Condé, to whose care he had confided his interests, and who consequently resolved to enforce more ample justice for himself. With a view of effecting his purpose, he induced the Duke de Retz, who was equally dissatisfied, to follow his example, and Brittany soon became ripe for revolt. As, however, Vendôme did not fail to perceive that without extending his faction he could not hope to make head successfully against the court, he next endeavoured to engage M. de Rohan and the Protestants in his interest; believing the duke to be much more powerful with the reformed party than he really was, and Rohan so far yielded as to attempt a convocation of the general assembly in Gascony; but

the prudence of du Plessis-Mornay, who represented to the Huguenots the impolicy of embroiling themselves with the government in order to gratify the ambition of an individual, decided them to refuse all participation in a political movement of that nature.

Repulsed but not discouraged, Vendôme still persevered, and as his intrigues tended to unsettle the minds of the people, and to harass the Regent, she resolved to dispatch the Marquis de Cœuvres, then recently returned from his embassy in Italy, to expostulate with him, and to endeavour to recal him to reason. This mission was peculiarly distasteful to the marquis, who being nearly connected with M. de Vendôme through his mother (Gabrielle d'Estrées), was fearful, should he fail to effect his purpose, that he must offend one or the other party; but as the commands of the Queen-mother were stringent, he was compelled to obey. His task proved an arduous one, the two dukes warmly asserting their right to share in the benefits which M. de Condé had secured for himself and his immediate friends, and declaring their intention to obtain by force what they had been denied by the ingratitude of the crown; nor was it until the envoy had been a second time instructed to assure them that should they persist in their disloyalty, the King was prepared to march an army against them, that they were at length induced to sign a treaty which had been drawn up for that purpose, and to lay down their arms.

This desirable result had scarcely been accomplished when the Prince de Condé, disappointed by his government of Amboise, (which he soon discovered to be of much less importance than he had imagined when he insisted upon its possession,) resolved to make himself master of the city of Poitiers, where he had secured many and active allies, among whom the most considerable was the Duke de Roannois, the governor; while in addition to this advantage he had also received from the Marquis de Bonnivet a promise that he would furnish a body of troops to assist him in his enterprise. The city was about to elect a mayor, and the friends of Condé had exerted themselves to the utmost to cause the choice of the citizens to fall upon an individual of their own party, but their design was penetrated by the bishop,* who hastened to apprise the Regent of the cabal which had once more been commenced against her authority.

The intelligence of the prelate renewed all the apprehensions of Marie, who after expressing her acknowledgments for his zeal, commanded him to adopt every means in his power to contravene the endeavours of the Prince and his adherents; and so ably did he fulfil her directions that he succeeded in winning over to the royal cause the greater number of the inhabitants; which he had no sooner accomplished than he caused the guards to be doubled, and thus rendered himself more powerful in the city than M. de Roannois himself.

* Henri de Chateignier de la Rocheposay.

This fact soon became apparent to Condé, but he still trusted to the support of his friends, and accordingly presented himself at the gates with a small retinue, believing that the citizens would obey their governor, and refuse to oppose his entrance. The bishop had, however, by the promptitude of his measures, effectually defeated the hopes of the Prince. He had loudly proclaimed in the streets that there was a conspiracy on foot for delivering up the city to the enemies of the King; and this announcement had at once sufficed to arouse all the energy of the inhabitants. In a short time the gates were closed, chains were stretched across the thoroughfares, and numerous barricades were erected. The prelate, gratified by these fearless evidences of his influence, became to the full as excited as his diocesans, and arming himself with a pike, he placed himself at the head of the people, urging them to resist to the utmost the dishonour by which they were threatened; while the governor, who was then inhabiting a suburban residence, no sooner became apprised of the belligerent demonstrations of the bishop, and the effects which they had produced, than he galloped to the gates with the intention of opposing his authority to that of his clerical antagonist. At his command the gates were opened, and directing the immediate demolition of the barricades, he proceeded to the episcopal palace; not, however, without being subjected to the abuse of the irritated populace. The bishop, whose policy was not inferior to his courage, offered him an asylum until the fury of

the crowd should be appeased; and M. de Roannois, alarmed by the rough reception he had already encountered, at once accepted the offer, and thus became the prisoner of the prelate; who, producing the letter of the Regent, issued the orders necessary to ensure the safety of the city. Nor was this all; for with a sword by his side, the bishop personally posted the sentinels at nightfall, and distributed money from his own private purse to the non-military combatants who had formed themselves into a militia.

Enraged by his disappointment, M. de Condé, after vainly attempting to obtain a hearing from the excited citizens, found himself compelled to retire with his companions, having on his way burnt down the country palace of the bishops of Poitiers; and he had no sooner reached that city than he wrote to the Regent to complain of the insult to which he had been subjected by the inhabitants of Poitiers, and to demand justice. The sympathies of the court were, however, with the adverse party; but Marie de Medicis was so well aware of the consequences to be apprehended from his irritation that she resolved to proceed to Poitou and Brittany in person, on the pretext of the weak health of the King, by whom she was to be accompanied. She accordingly caused a rumour to be spread that Louis had displayed symptoms of disease which rendered it probable that he could not long survive; and having done this, the troops were warned to hold themselves in readiness to leave the capital with his Majesty. Mean-

while the Duke de Mayenne was dispatched to M. de Condé to assure him on the part of the Regent that every respect should be paid to his representation, and at the same time letters of abolition were sent to all his adherents; although he was requested to retire from Poitou during the sojourn of their Majesties. To this demand Condé at first demurred; but finding that he could not succeed in securing the assistance of the reformed party, he at length consented to withdraw; and not venturing to return to Amboise, he took up his temporary residence at Châteauroux in Berry.

The retreat of the Prince was a great triumph to the warlike bishop, who lost no time in proceeding to Tours (where the court had already arrived), at the head of two hundred of his diocesans, to entreat of their Majesties to proceed at once to Poitiers, in order to restore public confidence. His reception by the Regent was gracious in the extreme, nor did the young sovereign fail to express to the exulting prelate his own sense of obligation. At Poitiers the court was met by the most enthusiastic acclamations: their Majesties honoured the election of the new mayor with their presence; and the lieutenant-generalship of the province was bestowed upon the Count de la Rochefoucault, an adherent of the Duke de Guise.

From Poitiers the court proceeded to Angers, on its way to Brittany; where, however, the Duke de Vendôme did not wait its arrival to make his submission. The inertness of the government upon previous occasions

not having prepared him for the energy now exhibited by the sovereign, his alarm was comparatively increased; and he hastened to meet their Majesties accompanied by all the nobility of the province. On approaching the King he laid his sword at his feet; and, as he knelt beside it, entreated his forgiveness of his past errors, and expressed his determination thenceforward to give him no further subject of complaint; upon which Louis commanded him to rise, and granted him a free pardon, which was ratified by the Regent. Letters patent were dispatched by which he was reinstated in his government, and made irresponsible for all the excesses committed by his troops; and once more the son of Gabrielle d'Estrées was restored to the favour, if not to the confidence, of his sovereigns.

The assembly of the States then took place at Nantes, presided by the Duke de Rohan; and during its meetings the King was apprised by its members of the enormities of which the followers of M. de Vendôme had been guilty throughout the province, and respectfully solicited to exclude from the letters of abolition the authors of the frightful crimes of which the people had been made the victims. Among those of which they complained were the ransom of wives by their husbands, of daughters and young children by their parents, and of fields of grain by their owners. They, moreover, demanded justice for still greater enormities; and revealed to the council the appalling fact that wealthy individuals had been subjected to torture, and

in many instances even put to death, in order to compel them to deliver up their money; while others had been compelled to pay a heavy sum to save their dwellings and their property from the brand of the incendiary.

This frightful revelation excited the horror and indignation of Marie and her council; and, in reply to their requisition, the complainants were assured that, although the King and his government had preferred to pardon the injuries which they had personally sustained from the faction of M. de Vendôme, rather than visit them with the vengeance that they had legally merited, neither the sovereign nor those who held office under him could permit crimes like those detailed in their remonstrance to be exercised with impunity upon the people, which would consequently be punished with the most extreme rigour.

The first independent act of the Duke de Vendôme had thus greatly injured him in the estimation of the young monarch and his mother; nor did his after-life tend to give them cause to alter the opinion which they then formed either as regarded his stability or his capacity. Even the marriage which his father, Henry IV., had with so much difficulty contracted for him with the heiress of the house of Mercœur,* failed

* In 1598 Henry IV. had marched against the Duke de Mercœur, who still held part of Brittany; and as the duke found himself, immediately on the appearance of the King, deserted by the nobility of the duchy, he gave himself up for lost. Opposition was of course useless; and he was about to surrender to the

to produce the result that had been anticipated, as he squandered her wealth, without increasing his own importance.*

On her triumphant return to the capital, Marie de Medicis was apprised of the death of the Prince de Conti, which had taken place on the 13th of August; but the void was little felt, the infirmities under which he laboured, and the weakness of his intellect, having, despite his exalted rank, rendered him a mere cipher at the court. By the nation his loss was totally unfelt; while this indifference was shared by his wife, whose violent passion for Bassompierre had long been notorious, and who shortly afterwards privately gave him her hand. Mademoiselle d'Entragues, the sister of the Marquise de Verneuil, to whom he had previously been

royal troops upon the best terms which he could obtain, when he saved himself by a lucky expedient. He was aware of the violent passion still felt by Henry for Gabrielle d'Estrées, and in order to escape the penalty of his rebellion, he offered the hand of his only daughter, with the duchies of Estampes, Penthièvre, and Mercœur as her dowry, to the King's natural son César de Vendôme; a proposal which was at once accepted, as the monarch was aware that it would gratify the ambition of his mistress. Subsequently, however, after the death of her father, the family of Mademoiselle de Mercœur had objected to the alliance, and it had required all the authority of Henry to compel its accomplishment.—*Davila, Hist. of Modern Europe*, London, 1794, Book xv, vol. iii, p. 49.

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 260—277. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 55—67. Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 253—261. Brienne, Mém., vol. i, pp. 296, 297, édition Petitot.

betrothed, and who had made him the father of a son,* had in vain endeavoured in the law-courts to compel him to fulfil his contract, and persisted in bearing his name; a fact which was so well known as to induce many persons to believe that she was in reality his wife. On one occasion, when he was in attendance upon the Queen, the royal carriage was detained for a moment by the crowd near that of Mademoiselle d'Entragues, whom Marie immediately recognised. "See;" she said with a malicious smile, as she pointed towards the lady with her fan; "there is Madame de Bassompierre."

"That is merely a *nom de guerre*, Madam," was the ready reply, uttered in a tone sufficiently loud to reach the ears of the person named, who angrily exclaimed:

"You are a fool, Bassompierre!"

"If I be not," was the quiet rejoinder of the ungallant Lothario; "it has at least, Madam, not been your fault."†

Thus, after his union with the Princess de Conti, Bassompierre, although claimed as a husband by two celebrated women, the first of a family notorious for the profligacy of its members, and the last a daughter of the proud house of Guise and moreover the widow of a prince of the blood, still continued to assume the privileges of a bachelor; resolutely disowning the one,

* Louis de Bassompierre, who subsequently became Bishop of Saintes.

† Petitot, Avertissement sur M. de Bassompierre.

while the other did not dare publicly to declare her marriage.*

A fortnight after the return of the court to Paris it was followed by the Prince de Condé, who had been summoned to attend the sovereign to Parliament on the termination of his minority, which ended when he entered his thirteenth year. On the 1st of October, the day preceding that on which the ceremony of his recognition as actual monarch of France was to take place, Louis XIII. issued a declaration confirmatory of the edict of pacification previously published, and renewing his prohibition against duelling and blasphemy. On the following morning the King ascended his bed of justice; and both the procession and the meeting were conducted with the greatest pomp. He was attended by the Queen-mother, Monsieur, and the Princes of Condé and Soissons, the Dukes of Guise, Elbœuf, Epernon, Ventadour, and Montbazon, and upwards of eight hundred mounted nobles, all attired in the most sumptuous manner. On his arrival at the palace the King was received by two presidents and four councillors, by whom he was conducted to the great hall; and after all the persons present had taken their places, his Majesty briefly declared the purpose for which he had convened the meeting. Marie de Medicis then in her turn addressed the assembly, declaring that she had resigned

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 263.

the administration of public affairs into the hands of the sovereign, who had some days previously attained his majority; and when she had ceased speaking Louis expressed his acknowledgments for the valuable services which she had rendered to the kingdom, his resolution still to be guided by her advice, and entreated her not to withhold from him her important assistance in the government. The chancellor, the first president,* and the advocate-general,† each delivered an harangue; after which the chancellor pronounced the decree which declared the majority of the sovereign; and the declaration that he had forwarded to the council on the previous day was duly registered. This act terminated the ceremony, and Louis XIII. returned to the Louvre accompanied and attended as he had reached the palace, amid the acclamations of the populace.

The assembly of the States-General at Sens had been fixed for the 10th of September, and would consequently have been held before the King had attained his majority, had not this arrangement been traversed by the Regent,

* Nicolas de Verdun, first president of the Parliament of Paris, a devoted adherent of M. de Villeroy.

† Louis Servin, councillor of state, advocate-general of the Parliament of Paris, and one of the most able magistrates of his time, served with zeal and fidelity under Henry III., Henry IV., and Louis XIII. He died suddenly, at the feet of the latter monarch, on the 19th of March, 1626, while remonstrating with him in the name of the Parliament, where he was holding his bed of justice, against certain financial edicts. He was the author of several legal writings, orations, and sundry other works.

who apprehended that they would seize so favourable an opportunity of thwarting all her views; and would not only demand the dismissal of the ministers and the Maréchal d'Ancre, but also, which was still more important, dissuade the sovereign, whose minority would terminate during their sitting, from permitting her to retain any share in the government. The Prince de Condé and his partisans, whose interests undoubtedly demanded such a result, had, however, themselves been instrumental in the delay so earnestly desired by Marie; the hostile demonstrations of Vendôme in Brittany, and the ill-judged movements of Condé himself in Poitou, having furnished her with a plausible pretext for deferring the opening of the States until the King could preside over them in person; when the public declaration made before the Parliament by the young sovereign of his intention still to be guided by the counsels of his mother at once freed her from all her apprehensions; and she accordingly lost no time in transferring the assembly from Sens to Paris, and of proroguing it till the 10th of October.

Nevertheless much was to be feared should the clergy, the nobility, and the people act unanimously; and in order to prevent such a coalition, neither Marie de Medicis nor her ministers spared any exertion. As much depended upon the presidents whom they might select, the first care of the Queen-mother was to ensure the election of persons favourable to her own interests; but as great caution was necessary with regard to the agent to whom she could intrust so delicate a mission

as that of causing such individuals to be chosen, she hesitated for a time before she came to a decision. Ultimately, however, she fixed upon the young Count de Brienne;* and so thoroughly did he justify her preference, that he eventually succeeded, without any appearance of undue interposition, in securing the election of three presidents, all of whom were favourable to the court party.†

This important point gained, the government recovered its confidence; and its next care was to awaken the jealousy of each order against its coadjutors, and

* Henri Auguste de Lomenie, Count de Brienne, was the son of Antoine de Lomenie and of Anne d'Aubourg, and was born in 1594. In 1609 he attracted the attention of Henry IV., who occasionally admitted him to his councils, in order to familiarise him with public affairs; and Marie de Medicis continued, after the death of that monarch, to honour him with her regard. In 1617 he became master of the ceremonies and provost of the King's Orders. In 1621 he followed Louis XIII. to Languedoc, where he distinguished himself at the siege of Clerac; and in the following campaign he served under the Prince de Condé with equal credit. After struggling successfully throughout the long and stormy administration of Richelieu, he incurred the displeasure of Louis XIII. a short time after the death of that minister, and disposed of his office as secretary of state; but during the regency of Anne of Austria he was recalled; and until Louis XIV. undertook to govern the nation in his own person, he maintained a great influence in the council. Age was, however, creeping upon him; and a short time subsequent to the marriage of that monarch, having attained his sixty-seventh year, he retired from the government. He died in 1666.

† Petitot, Notice sur le Comte de Brienne, p. 278.

thus to paralyse the influence of the Assembly. In this attempt it was perfectly successful; and the general welfare of the country was overlooked in the anxiety of the several parties to carry out their own individual views. The clergy demanded the publication of the Council of Trent, and the unrestricted admission of its decrees throughout the kingdom; the nobility asked that the privilege of the *paulette* should be abolished;* and the *tiers-état*† solicited either the suppression or diminution of the pensions by which the public treasury was involved in debt.

The speaker elected by the clergy was the Archbishop of Lyons; the nobility chose as their spokesman the Baron du Pont Saint-Pierre,‡ while the *tiers-état* was presided by M. Miron.§ The two first-named orators

* This privilege rendered the financial and judicial offices hereditary, on the payment of an annual tax of one-tenth of the sum at which they had been originally purchased; and the nobility were jealous of this hereditary tenure of the most lucrative civil appointments under the crown, all of which were thus, as a natural consequence, engrossed by the *tiers-état*. The *paulette* owed its name to Charles Paulet, who was the inventor of this extraordinary source of revenue.

† *Tiers-état*, or middle state, was the name given to that portion of the French people who belonged neither to the aristocracy nor to the church.

‡ Pierre de Roncherolles, Baron du Pont Saint-Pierre.

§ Robert Miron, provost of the merchants, an able politician, whose zeal and talents were recompensed by the confidence and favour of Louis XIII., by whom he was, in 1625, intrusted with the embassy to Switzerland.

addressed the King standing and bareheaded; but this privilege was considered too great for a body which could boast of neither hereditary nor ecclesiastical nobility; and the able diplomatist and rhetoritician who upon that occasion pleaded before his sovereign the rights and immunities of the class which he had been called upon to represent, was compelled to address that sovereign upon his knees. M. de Miron had, previous to the meeting of the States, excited the indignation of the more patrician orders, by declaring that he regarded the three bodies of which it was composed as one family, of which the nobility and clergy represented the elder, and the *tiers-état* the junior branches; while the Queen herself, even while she felt the importance of his support, did not hesitate to treat the deputies of his order with the greatest arrogance and discourtesy, although they distinguished themselves by a loyalty and devotion to the interests of the crown which met with no response from the haughtier members of the Assembly. Ably, indeed, through the agency of Miron, did they persist in defending the royal prerogative, and demand that a principle should be established forbidding the deposition of their sovereigns on accusations of heresy; expressing their desire that the crown should be recognised by law as completely independent of spiritual power; and although the clergy, through the Cardinal Duperron, formally and strenuously opposed these propositions, so little was Miron affected by the adverse circumstances under which he appeared, that he replied with a logic

and energy which compelled the States to defer their decision until the following year.*

Louis XIII., at this period, was in so delicate a state of health as to require constant care and attention, while his sullen and self-centred disposition demanded no less watchfulness. His first preceptor was M. Vauguelin des Ivetaux, a man of great talent, and quite equal to the task of forming the mind and intellect of a prince, but of dissolute principles and sensual habits.† He, however, did not long remain about the person of the boy-King, having been replaced a year after the death of Henry IV. by Nicolas le Fèvre,‡ who was distinguished alike for his learning and his piety. Unfortunately for the young Louis, this excellent man only lived a year after his appointment, and was, in his turn, replaced by M. de Rivault,§ a celebrated mathematician, who had been educated with Guy, Count de Laval.‖ Thus, how-

* Bonnechose, vol. i, pp. 451, 452. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 73—78. Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 298—302.

† Marville, Mélanges d'Histoire et de Littérature.

‡ Nicolas le Fèvre was born at Paris, in 1544, and devoted himself to literature. Henry IV. intrusted to him the education of the Prince de Condé; and he subsequently became, under Marie de Medicis, the preceptor of Louis XIII. He died in 1612.

§ David de Rivault, Sieur de Flurance, was born at Laval in 1571, and died at Tours in 1616. He was the author of several works, which elicited the admiration of Malherbe and other distinguished writers.

‖ Guy, Count de Laval, was the brother of the Duke de la Trémouille.

ever competent these several individuals might have been to conduct his education, it will be at once evident that the perpetual changes of method and purpose to which he was subjected greatly tended to impede the progress of the illustrious pupil; and it consequently ceases to be matter of surprise that on his majority he had by no means attained to the degree of knowledge common to his age. Louis XIII. knew little Latin; cared nothing for literature; but although either irritable or inert when compelled to study, could develop great energy when he was engaged in gunnery, horsemanship, or falconry. The latter pursuit was his principal amusement. His purity of heart and propriety of language were extreme, and deserve the greater mention from the contrast which they afforded to the morals and manners by which he was surrounded. He would neither permit an oath nor an obscene expression to be uttered in his presence, and never failed to rebuke any violation of his pleasure in this respect. He was passionately attached to dogs, and conversed with them, according to a contemporaneous historian, in a peculiar language;* but as regarded his kingly duties he was utterly incompetent. With good intentions, a love of justice, and a deep sense of religion, he was vacillating and indolent; and cared little, either to assert his privileges, or to take upon himself the cares and fatigues of government while he could transmit them to others, and thus

* Bernard, Hist. de Louis XIII., Book I.

secure time to abandon himself to more congenial pursuits.

In this circumstance were comprised all the errors of his reign; as even while deeply imbued with a sense of his dignity as the sovereign of a great nation, he exhibited the feeling only in acts of petty and obstinate opposition which tended to no result, and were productive only of a want of attachment to his person, and of respect for his opinions, which increased the arrogance of the great nobles, and fostered the ambition of his ministers.

It is now time that we should introduce an individual whose subsequent importance in the kingdom, humble as were his antecedents, was one source of the bitter trials to which the unfortunate Marie de Medicis was subjected during a long period of her life. The Count de Lude had in his service a page, who was subsequently transferred to that of the young King; and it is the history of this apparently insignificant person which we are now called upon to detail to the reader. Albert de Luynes, his father, was the son of Guillaume Segur, a canon of the cathedral of Marseilles, and of the housekeeper of the said ecclesiastic; and derived the name of Luynes from a small tenement upon the bank of that river, between Aix and Marseilles, which was the property of the canon; who preferred that his son should adopt the appellation of his farm rather than his own. There was, however, an elder brother, on whom the little property belonging to the

priest was exclusively bestowed, and Luynes accordingly discovered that he must become the architect of his own fortunes. With all the fearless confidence of youth he made his way, as he best could, to the capital, where he enlisted as an archer of the body-guard, displayed great aptitude and courage, and finally obtained the governorship of Pont-St.-Esprit. While thus prospering in the world he married, became the father of seven children, of whom three were sons; and died without suspecting that his name would be handed down to posterity through the medium of one of these almost portionless boys, whose sole inheritance was a small dairy-farm of the annual value of twelve hundred livres.

Charles de Luynes, the elder of this numerous family, became, as already stated, the page of the Count de Lude; and, as his brothers were totally without resources, he induced his patron to receive them gratuitously into his suite, in order that he might be enabled to share with them the four hundred annual crowns which, together with his slender patrimony, formed his own income. This favour had no sooner been conceded than the three young men discarded the modest names of Charles, Honoré, and Leon d'Albert, by which they had previously been known, and assumed those of Luynes, Cadenet, and Brantes, from the field, the vineyard, and a small sand island beside them, which composed their joint estate.*

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, vol. xxii, p. 296.

"Possessions," as Bassompierre facetiously observes; "over which a hare leapt every day." On the miserable pittance of the elder brother the three young adventurers, nevertheless, contrived with considerable difficulty to exist, although it was notorious that they had but one cloak, at that period an indispensable article of costume, among them; a circumstance by which two were compelled to avoid observation while the third fulfilled his duties; and so little, moreover, were their services valued by M. de Lude that he was in the habit of declaring that they were fit for nothing but "to catch green jays," a reproach which they owed to their skill in dressing sparrow-hawks to take small birds; and to which he was far from supposing when he gave it utterance that they would ultimately be indebted for a prosperity almost fabulous.

Such, however, was fated to be the case. Charles de Luynes had not been long at court before he ascertained the passion of the young King for falconry, and having carefully trained two of his miniature hawks, he caused them to be offered in his name to his royal master. Louis was delighted by their docility and skill, and desired that the donor should be presented to him; when he found that the page was deeply versed in all the mysteries of that sport to which he was himself so much attached; and thenceforward he constantly commanded his attendance whenever he pursued his favourite pastime in the gardens of the Tuileries.

At this period M. de Luynes had already attained his thirtieth year; and, with admirable self-government, he had so thoroughly controlled himself as to disguise the salient features of his character. No one consequently suspected either his latent ambition, or the violent passions which he had craft enough to conceal; and thus the very individuals who were the objects of his hatred regarded him merely as a shallow and superficial young man, whose whole soul was in the puerile sports to which he had addicted himself.

It was not, however, solely to take small birds that de Luynes aspired when he thus found himself the chosen companion of the Dauphin; he had other talents which he exerted so zealously that he ere long made himself indispensable. Gifted with a magnificent person, insinuating manners, and that ready tact by which an indolent nature is unconsciously roused to excitement, he soon obtained an extraordinary influence over his royal playmate by the power which he possessed of overcoming his habitual apathy, and causing him to enter with zest and enjoyment into the pleasures of his age. Henry IV. who perceived with gratification the beneficial effect produced upon the saturnine nature of his son, and who was moreover touched by the fraternal devotion of the page, transferred him to the household of the Dauphin, and augmented his income to twelve hundred crowns; and thenceforward he became at once the companion, the counsellor, and the friend of the young

Louis; and at the desire of the Prince he was created master of the aviary.

Time passed on. The Dauphin succeeded to the throne of his murdered father; the regency tottered under the machinations of the great nobles; faction grew out of faction; cabals and conspiracies kept the nation in one perpetual state of anxiety and unrest; but the influence of de Luynes continued undiminished; and neither Marie de Medicis nor her ministers apprehended any danger from an association that was fated to produce the most serious consequences; while the princes were equally disinclined to disturb the amusements by which the young monarch was so entirely absorbed as to pay little attention to the important events which succeeded each other about him.

As he grew older Louis became still more attached to his favourite. His discontented spirit made him irritable under every disappointment, and vindictive towards those by whom his wishes were opposed: he detested alike explanation and remonstrance, and from de Luynes he never encountered either the one or the other. Under the remonstrances of his mother he became sullen; to the arrogant assumption of the princes and the Maréchal d'Ancre he opposed an apathetic silence which caused them to believe that it was unfelt; and it was only to de Luynes that he poured forth all his indignation, that he complained

with bitterness of the iron rule of Marie, the insolence of his nobles, and the ostentatious profusion of the Italian: contrasting the first with his own helplessness, the second with the insignificance to which he was condemned, and the last to the almost penury to which he was compelled to submit.

No prince had ever a more attentive or a more interested auditor. The enemies of the young Louis were also those of his favourite; for, as before remarked, the grandson of the reverend canon of Marseilles was alike vain and ambitious, and consequently inimical to all who occupied the high places to which he himself aspired. Moreover, the powerlessness and poverty of the young monarch necessarily involved those of his follower; and thus both by inclination and by interest de Luynes was bound to share the antipathies of his master.

Like all favourites, moreover, he soon made a host of personal adversaries; while, as these were far from suspecting the height to which he was ultimately destined to attain, they took little pains to dissemble their dislike and contempt of the new minion; and thus, ere long, de Luynes had amassed a weighty load of hatred in his heart. To him it appeared that all the great dignitaries of the kingdom, although born to the rank they held, were engrossing honours which, possessed as he was of the favour of the sovereign, should have been conferred upon himself; but the especial antipathy of the arrogant adventurer was directed against the Queen,

the Maréchal d'Ancre, and the President Jeannin. To account for his bitter feeling towards Marie de Medicis, it is only necessary to state that, blinded by his ambition, he had dared to display for the haughty Princess a passion which was coldly and disdainfully repulsed; and that he had vowed to revenge the overthrow of his hopes.*

His hatred of Concini is as easily explained; it being merely the jealousy of a rival favourite. The Italian was to the mother of the King precisely what de Luynes was to the King himself; and as Marie possessed more power than her son, so also was her follower more richly recompensed. Still, however, the game was an unequal one, of which the chances were all in his own favour; for the maréchal was playing away the present, while his adversary was staking upon the future. The President Jeannin was, also, as we have stated, especially distasteful to de Luynes, as he made no secret of his dissatisfaction at the frivolous existence of the young sovereign, and his desire that he should exchange the boyish diversions to which he was addicted for pursuits more worthy of his high station; while at the same time, he exhibited towards the favourite an undisguised disdain which excited all the worst passions of its object.

Thus, insignificant as he appeared to those who

* Bernard, Book iv. Additions aux Mémoires de Castelnau, Book vi, pp. 455—457. Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, p. 284.

were basking in favour, and who esteemed themselves too highly to waste one thought upon the obsequious dependent of a youthful and wayward sovereign, who suffered himself to be guided by those about him as though reckless of the result of their conflicting ambitions, it will be readily understood that de Luynes was laying up a store of antipathies which required only time and opportunity to develop themselves, and to bear the most bitter fruits; and already did the active favourite begin to enjoy a foretaste of the coming harvest. Ever earnest for right, Louis XIII. never exhibited any personal energy to secure it, and consequently could effect nothing of himself; readily prejudiced, alike by his own caprices and by the representations of others, his very anxiety to act as became a monarch rendered him vulnerable to the intrigues of those whose interests tended to mislead his judgment; and as de Luynes, while sharing in his superstitious acts of overstrained devotion, or amusing his idleness by the futilities of falconry and other even less dignified sports, did not fail occasionally and cautiously to allude to more serious subjects, the boy-King listened eagerly to the recitals and opinions of his chosen friend, and finished by adopting all his views.

This fact soon became so obvious to Concini, that the wily Italian, who dreaded lest the day might not be far distant when the son of Marie de Medicis would shake off the yoke of her *quasi*-regency and assert his own prerogative, resolved to secure the good offices of

de Luynes, and for this purpose he induced M. de Condé to restore to the King the government of Amboise; representing to the Prince the slight importance of such a possession to a person of his rank; and the conviction which its voluntary surrender must impress upon the ministers of his desire to strengthen the royal cause. Let it not be supposed, however, that, at the period of which we write, such a surrender could for a moment be anticipated gratuitously; and thus, when the first prince of the blood was at length induced to yield to the representations of his insidious adviser, the terms of the bargain were fully understood on both sides; but even when he had succeeded in obtaining the consent of M. de Condé himself to the arrangement, Concini had still to overcome the scruples of the Queen-mother, to whom he hastened to suggest that the vacated government should be bestowed upon Charles de Luynes.

As he had anticipated, Marie de Medicis was startled by so extraordinary a proposition. De Luynes was a mere hanger-on of the court; the companion of the boyish pleasures of her son; and without one claim to honour or advancement. But these very arguments strengthened the position of the maréchal. The poverty of the King's favourite secured, as he averred, his fidelity to those who might lay the foundations of his fortune; and if, as the astute Italian moreover cleverly remarked, de Luynes were in truth merely the playmate of the monarch, he possessed at least the

merit of engrossing his thoughts, and of thus rendering him less desirous to control or to criticise the measures of others. Marie yielded to this argument; she had began to love power for its own sake; and she could not disguise from herself that her future tenure of authority must depend solely upon the will of the young sovereign. In order, therefore, to secure to herself the good offices of one so influential with his royal master as de Luynes, she consented to follow the advice of Concini, who forthwith, in her name, remunerated M. de Condé for his secession, by upwards of a hundred thousand crowns, and the grandson of Guillaume Segur became governor of the city and fortress of Amboise.*

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, pp. 284, 285.

CHAPTER VII.

[1615—16.]

CLOSE OF THE STATES-GENERAL—THE BISHOP OF LUÇON—DECLARATION OF THE ROYAL MARRIAGES—BALLET OF MADAME—STATE OF THE COURT—CABAL OF CONCINI—DEATH OF MARGUERITE DE VALOIS—CONDÉ SEEKS TO GAIN THE PARLIAMENT—DISTRUST OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—CONDÉ LEAVES PARIS—HE REFUSES TO ACCOMPANY THE KING TO GUIENNE—PERILOUS POSITION OF THE COURT-PARTY—THE MARÉCHAL DE BOIS-DAUPHIN IS APPOINTED COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF—THE COURT PROCEED TO GUIENNE—ILLNESS OF THE QUEEN AND MADAME ELISABETH—THE COURT AT TOURS—ENFORCED INERTNESS OF M. DE BOIS-DAUPHIN—CONDÉ IS DECLARED GUILTY OF LÈSE-MAJESTÉ—HE TAKES UP ARMS—MURMURS OF THE ROYAL GENERALS—THE COUNT DE ST. POL MAKES HIS SUBMISSION—THE COURT REACH BORDEAUX—THE ROYAL MARRIAGES—SUFFERINGS OF THE TROOPS—DISAFFECTION OF THE NOBILITY—IRRITATION OF THE PROTESTANTS—PASQUINADES—NEGOCIATION WITH THE PRINCES—THE DUKE DE GUISE ASSUMES THE COMMAND OF THE ROYAL ARMY—SINGULAR ESCAPE OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—DISGRACE OF THE DUKE D'EPERNON—HE RETIRES TO HIS GOVERNMENT—THE QUEEN AND THE ASTROLOGER.

CHAPTER VII.

[1615—16.]

THE assembly of the States-General occupied the commencement of the year 1615; and was closed on the 22nd of February, by their Majesties in person, with extreme pomp. When the King and his august mother had taken their seats, and that the heralds had proclaimed silence, Armand Jean du-Plessis, Bishop of Luçon,* presented to the sovereign the requisition of

* Armand Jean du-Plessis, afterwards the celebrated Cardinal de Richelieu, was the third son of François du-Plessis, Seigneur de Richelieu, knight of the Orders of the King, and grand-provost of France. He was born in Paris, on the 5th of September, 1585; and having been educated with great care, became an accomplished scholar. At the age of twenty-two years he was received as a member of the Sorbonne; and having obtained a dispensation from Paul V. for the bishopric of Luçon, was consecrated at Rome by the Cardinal de Givry, in 1607. On his return to France, he was introduced to the notice of Marie de Medicis by the Marquise de Guercheville and the Maréchal d'Ancre.

the clergy; and after a long harangue, in which he detailed their several demands, he entered into an animated eulogium of the administration of the Queen, exhorting his Majesty to continue to her the power of which she had so ably availed herself during his minority. He spoke fluently, but in a broken and uncertain voice, and with an apparent apathy, which, according to contemporaneous authors, gave no indication of the extraordinary talents that he subsequently displayed.

The States-General had no sooner closed than Marie de Medicis resolved to terminate the double alliance which had been concluded with Spain; and in honour of this event she determined that Madame, the promised bride of Philip, should appear in a ballet, which by the sumptuousness of its decorations, the beauty of its machinery, and the magnificence of its entire arrangements, should eclipse every entertainment of the kind hitherto exhibited at the French court.

"It is necessary;" she said; "that my daughter should give a public festival before her departure for Spain, and that the Parisians should remember a Princess who is about to be lost to France."

That the worthy citizens were on their part most anxious so to do, is evident from the testimony of Bassompierre, who states that, unprepared for so great a crowd as that which presented itself upon the occasion, proper precautions had not been taken, and it was subsequently found necessary to postpone the

amusement for some days, and to arrange that no one should enter the Salle de Bourbon without a ticket; which the Duke d'Epernon and himself were intrusted to receive.*

This entertainment was followed by another of a similar description at the Hôtel de Condé; but although they affected to be equally engrossed by the festivities in which they shared, neither the Queen nor the Prince were so indifferent to their personal interests as they endeavoured to appear. Marie de Medicis was studying to discover some means of terminating the cabals which were perpetually thwarting her designs, and threatening her authority; while M. de Condé was as eager as ever to undermine her power. The Maréchal d'Ancre was intriguing to effect the disgrace of the ministers, particularly that of Villeroy, whose alliance he no longer coveted; and the great nobles were busied in searching to discover some pretext sufficiently plausible to cause the ruin of the presumptuous favourite who assumed to treat them rather as inferiors than as equals. Thus the gilded surface of the court concealed a mass of hatred, jealousy, and unrest, which threatened every instant to reveal itself, and to dispel an illusion as false as it was flattering: and while the foreign guests of the young monarch danced and feasted, and the

* Bassompierre, Mém., p. 96.

native nobility struggled to surpass them in magnificence and frivolity, the more thoughtful spectators of the glittering scene trembled at its instability, and every instant anticipated an outbreak.

The attempt of Concini proved successful, and the deportment of Marie towards M. de Villeroy became so chilling that he withdrew from the court, without seeking to ascertain the cause of his disgrace.

On the 27th of March the ex-Queen Marguerite breathed her last; but for some time previously she had appeared so seldom at court that her death did not tend to disturb the gaieties of the royal circle, who had almost ceased to remember her existence. She had outlived even the reputation of her vices.

When the Prince de Condé and his faction demanded a meeting of the States they were far from anticipating its result; the unanimous loyalty of the deputies having greatly subserved the interests of the Queen, and thus weakened their own position. Aware too late of the error which they had committed, they were consequently compelled to seek elsewhere for support; and it was at length decided that they should excite the disaffection of the Parliament, by representing that all the services which its members had rendered to Marie on her assumption of the regency, had been repaid by ingratitude and neglect; and that they no longer commanded that authority in the government to which they were justly entitled.

Coupled with these insidious arguments were profuse offers of assistance to enable them to enforce their rights, and the object of the faction was at once gained; the ambition and the vanity of the Parliament being alike engaged in a question which involved their own influence and importance. Strong in the support of the princes, they, however, overacted the part assigned to them, and proceeded so arrogantly to remonstrate with the sovereign upon what they termed the abuses of the government, that the King issued a decree in council, by which he abrogated both their own decree and their remonstrances, declaring that they had exceeded the power accorded to them by the law; and commanding that those documents should be cancelled, torn from the registers, and delivered to his Majesty on the receipt of the royal decree. The Parliament, however, expostulated; and although they were again commanded to deliver up the obnoxious records, they failed to obey; and thus, by their determination, overruled the will of the sovereign.

During this struggle for power the Prince de Condé had absented himself from Paris, in order to avert any suspicion of connivance; but previous experience had rendered the Queen distrustful of his movements, and she was consequently prepared to counteract his subsequent intrigues. The council had, accordingly, no sooner annulled the decree of the Parliament, than she sent to forbid him, in the name of the King, from

assisting in their deliberations; upon which the Prince availed himself of so specious a pretext to abandon the court, alleging that he no longer considered it safe to remain in the capital.*

In accordance with this declaration he left Paris by the Porte St. Antoine, followed by the acclamations of the populace; who, weary of the rule of the Queen, and exasperated by the arrogance of her favourites, regarded M. de Condé as a victim, and thus rendered his retreat a new subject of anxiety to the court-party. Nor was their annoyance decreased when they ascertained that throughout his journey to Creil, where he possessed an estate on the banks of the Oise, he was met by numerous bodies of armed citizens from Senlis, Mantes, Beaumont, and other towns, and was accompanied by the Duke de Longueville and the nobles attached to his cause. Within a league of Creil the harquebusiers were drawn up to receive him, with drums beating and colours flying, and thus escorted he finally entered the city.

On learning these circumstances Marie de Medicis became apprehensive that he might avail himself of so favourable an opportunity to raise an army, and enter into open rebellion against the crown; and in order to avert this contingency, she lost no time in dispatching a messenger who was instructed to invite him to return to Paris, and to accompany the court in their approach-

* Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. i, p. 334.

ing journey to Guienne. M. de Condé was, however, aware of the advantage which he had gained, and resolutely refused to retrace his steps until the King reformed the council, replied to the remonstrances of the Parliament, and redressed the alleged wrongs of himself and his friends; demanding in his own name the presidency of the council, and the ministry of finance which had been promised to him; while the Maréchal de Bouillon, in his turn, asked as the price of his obedience the office of Connétable of France vacant by the death of the Duke de Montmorency.*

These demands not being conceded, the Prince de Condé refused to accompany the King to Guienne, an example which was followed by many of the high nobility; and the faction became ere long so formidable hat a civil war appeared inevitable.

Nevertheless, the Maréchal d'Ancre and his adherents affected to treat the warlike demonstrations of the adverse party with contempt; and assured Marie de Medicis that all the efforts of the Prince must prove abortive while the King possessed a strong army and able generals to oppose the forces of the malcontents; and, in support of his assertion, the Dukes of Guise and Epernon alike offered their services to her Majesty. In the former, however, Marie dared not confide; his near relative, the Duke de Mayenne, being the ally of Condé, while de Guise himself was the avowed enemy

* Continuation of Mezeray. Hist. de France.

of Concini. Of M. d'Epernon's sincerity she felt more assured; but she was aware that she could not bestow upon him the command of the royal army without exciting the jealousy of Guise, and thus opening up a new source of difficulty. Desirous to proceed to Guienne without further delay, the Queen consequently urged her advisers to suggest some other individual to whom so serious a responsibility might be intrusted; and after considerable deliberation, the Duke d'Epernon, the chancellor, and his son the Chevalier de Sillery, proposed to the Maréchal d'Ancre that he should become a candidate for the command, offering at the same time to exert all their influence with the Queen to ensure his success.*

Blinded by vanity, Concini, who was a soldier only in name, did not fail to listen with greedy ears to this unexpected proposition; and while his seeming friends were speculating upon his ruin, and calculating that during his absence they should have time to impress upon Marie de Medicis that, by the sacrifice of her favourite, she might reconcile the disaffected princes; Concini himself foresaw that the increase of influence which so important a command could not fail to secure to him, must tend to diminish that of the Duke d'Epernon, whose overthrow had been for some time his greatest wish. Moreover, by quartering his troops in the neighbourhood of M. de Condé, an oppor-

* Vie du Duc d'Epernon, Book III.

tunity would present itself of effecting his reconciliation with that Prince, which he ardently desired; and this end accomplished, he flattered himself with the hope that his vision of becoming first minister of France could not fail to be realised.

Unfortunately, however, for the ambitious Italian, it was not long ere d'Epernon and Sillery recognised the error into which they had been led by their eagerness to injure him. They suddenly remembered that Concini had already once joined the faction of the princes, and they were aware that the Duke de Bouillon had made more than one subsequent effort to induce him to abandon the royal cause; and they were no sooner convinced of the fault which they had committed, than they hastened to represent to the Queen that the appointment of the Maréchal d'Ancre to the command of the King's armies had caused great dissatisfaction throughout the capital; the citizens affirming that the troops of a sovereign of France ought not to be led against the enemy by a man who was ignorant of the art of war, and who was, moreover, a foreigner, detested by the people to an extent which rendered it probable that, should Concini be invested with the command, they would open the gates of Paris to M. de Condé, in the event of his marching upon the city. Marie de Medicis yielded to these reasons; and simply replied by reminding Sillery that if she had committed an error in accepting the proposal of the Maréchal d'Ancre, she had done so at his own instigation; but that as he

considered it desirable to appoint some other individual to the command, she would offer no opposition. Concini was accordingly superseded, and the veteran Maréchal de Bois-Dauphin was selected as his successor, with the title of lieutenant-general.* Indignant at the disappointment to which he had been subjected, Concini left Paris, and proceeded to his government at Amiens, vowing vengeance against the Duke d'Epernon and Sillery.

The impatience of the Queen to conclude the double alliance with Spain was so great, that she disregarded the advice of Jeannin and Villeroy; who, in conjunction with Concini and his wife, had endeavoured to induce her to delay her departure for Guienne, and to proceed either to Laon or St. Quentin, in order to secure the Isle of France and Picardy, and to prevent the Prince de Condé and his adherents from concentrating their forces in the vicinity of the capital; while on the contrary she was urged by the chancellor and his brother, the Commandeur de Sillery, who was her first-equerry and gentleman-usher, to carry out her original design. The 17th of August had been already fixed for the commencement of the royal journey; and Marie eagerly availed herself of their advice to persist in her purpose; satisfying herself by giving orders to the Maréchal de Bois-Dauphin to cover Paris, to impede the approach of the disaffected forces, and, at all risks, to avoid coming

* Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 439, 440. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 98, 99. D'Estrées, Mém., p. 408.

to an engagement. She then withdrew from the Bastille eight hundred thousand crowns for the purpose of defraying the expenses of the court during its progress.

Despite the absence of the princes, the royal retinue was magnificent and numerous. The troops by whom the august travellers were attended consisted of a thousand horsemen, and the royal body-guard amounting to three thousand men, who were placed under the command of the Duke de Guise, who was also to accompany Madame Elisabeth to the frontier of the kingdom, and to receive the Infanta, whom he was to conduct to the capital of Guienne, where their Majesties were to await her. The King left Paris soon after dawn; the Queen followed some hours subsequently, having previously caused the arrest of M. le Jay,* in order to intimidate the Parliament; and finally, in the course of the afternoon, Madame took leave of the municipal authorities, and departed in her turn. The Marquise d'Ancre having in vain endeavoured to dissuade her royal foster-sister from this journey, became so thoroughly dispirited by the disappointment of her husband, and the evident decline of her own influence, that she resolved to excuse herself from accompanying the court, and to

* Nicolas le Jay, Baron de Tilly, &c., keeper of the seals, and first president of the Parliament of Paris. He rendered important services both to Henry IV. and Louis XIII., and acquired great celebrity both as a learned scholar and an upright minister. He died in 1640.

remain in the capital; a project from which she was, however, dissuaded by MM. de Villeroy and Jeannin, who represented to her the impolicy of incurring the displeasure of her Majesty, and thus insuring her own ruin. She was consequently induced to join the royal suite, but she did so with a heavy heart, and without one hope of resuming her original empire over the mind of Marie.

The court reached Orleans on the 20th of August, and Tours on the 30th, whence their Majesties proceeded to Poitiers, at which city they arrived on the 9th of September; but the anxieties of Marie de Medicis were not yet to terminate. Madame was attacked a day or two subsequently with small-pox, while the Queen herself was confined to her bed by a severe illness, which compelled the constant attendance of Madame d'Ancre in her sick-room, where by her affectionate assiduity, she soon succeeded in recovering the good graces of her royal mistress. She had secured to her interests a Jewish physician, in whose astrological talent Marie de Medicis placed the most implicit confidence; and eager to revenge her husband upon Sillery, who, as she was well aware, had been the cause of his losing the coveted command, she instructed this man, whom the Queen had hastened to consult, to persuade the credulous invalid that she had been bewitched by the Chevalier de Sillery. Strange as it may appear, Leonora was perfectly successful; and believing herself to have been the victim of the chan-

cellor and his party, Marie entered earnestly into the views of her favourite; consenting to withdraw her confidence from Sillery, and to follow thenceforward the counsels of Villeroy and Jeannin.*

The delay consequent upon the recovery of the Queen and her daughter, enabled the Prince de Condé to strengthen his party, and to advance towards Paris, with an army of five thousand infantry and two thousand horse. His troops were, however, badly armed, and might at once have been beaten or dispersed by the Maréchal de Bois-Dauphin, had that general marched against them; but, fettered by the stringent orders which he had received not to give battle to the enemy, he remained inactive; and the Duke de Bouillon profited by his inertness to seize Château Thierry, whence he marched to Méré-sur-Seine.

Meanwhile M. de Condé ascertained that the King had issued on the 10th of September a declaration of *lèse-majesté* against himself and his adherents; to which he replied by another, wherein he affirmed that he had taken up arms for the sole purpose of preventing a foreign invasion. He then crossed the Seine, with the intention of possessing himself of the town of Sens; a project in which he however failed, Bois-Dauphin and his adjutant-general, the Marquis de Praslin, having already garrisoned thē place.†

The two armies were at this period in such close

* Richelieu, Mém., Book VI, pp. 268—272.

† Matthieu, Hist. des Derniers Troubles, p. 550.

juxta-position that an engagement appeared inevitable; but whether it were that Bois-Dauphin was deficient in ability, or that he had resolved, whatever might be the result of his inaction, to obey implicitly the instructions of the Queen, he vacated Sens after a few slight skirmishes. Be the real cause of his supineness what it might, it excited the indignation of Bassompierre, Praslin, the Marquis de Cœuvres, and the other leaders of the royal army, who did not scruple to accuse him of incapacity; declaring moreover that he had harassed the troops far more than if he had led them into action.*

On the arrival of the court at Angoulême, the Queen was agreeably surprised by the appearance of the Count de Saint-Pol,† who, she had been led to believe, had joined the faction of Condé with his nephew the Duke de Longueville; and her exultation was increased when, with assurances of his fidelity to the crown, he placed under her orders the two fortresses of Fronsac and Caumont.‡

Profiting by the retreat of the Maréchal de Bois-Dauphin, the Duke de Bouillon had made all haste to pass the Loire, and to reach the confines of Tourraine and Poitou; nor would it have been possible for their

* Fontenay-Mareuil, Mém., pp. 290—298.

† Henri, Duke de la Ferté de Sénectère, Count de Saint-Pol and de Châteauneuf, Viscount de Lestrange and de Cheylane, Baron de Boulogne and de Privas, Seigneur de Saint-Marsal, de Ligny, de Dangu, de Précy, &c. &c.

‡ Sismondi, vol. xxii, p. 348.

Majesties to have reached Bordeaux in safety, had it not been for the secession of the Count de Saint-Pol from the faction of the princes, together with the impossibility of marching the rebel troops upon Poitou in so short a space of time. Thanks to this combination of circumstances, however, the court arrived without accident in the capital of Guienne on the 7th of October; where the King and his august mother were received with great magnificence, and enthusiastically welcomed by all classes of the citizens, whom the Maréchal de Roquelaure, lieutenant-general for the King in Guienne, and Mayor of Bordeaux, had adroitly gained, by his representations of the honour conferred upon them by the sovereign, in selecting their city as the scene of his own marriage, and that of his sister, the future Queen of Spain.*

It had been arranged that the royal marriages should be celebrated on the same day (the 18th of October), at Bordeaux and Burgos; and accordingly the Duke de Guise, as proxy for the Prince of Spain, espoused Madame Elisabeth, with whom, accompanied by the Duchess de Nevers, and the ladies of her household, he immediately departed for the frontier, after a painful leave-taking between the young Princess and her family; while the Duke d'Usséda† performed the same ceremony for Louis XIII., with the Infanta Anna Maria of Austria. The exchange of the two princesses took place on the

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 101, 102. Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 464.

† The Duke d'Usséda was the son of the Duke of Lerma.

9th of November, in the middle of the Bidassoa, with a host of petty and futile observances which excite rather pity than admiration; but at the same time with a magnificence surpassing all that had ever previously been exhibited on such an occasion; the two courts of France and Spain vying with each other in splendour and profusion. De Luynes, to whom such a mission appeared peculiarly adapted, presented to the Infanta the letters of welcome with which he had been intrusted by Louis XIII. and his mother, and which were received by the Princess with an undisguised delight that the favourite did not fail to report to his royal master.

The guard with which the Duke de Guise had conducted Madame Elisabeth to the frontier consisted of fifteen thousand horse, four thousand infantry, and four pieces of ordnance; and it was with the same troops that he escorted the newly-made Queen of France to Bordeaux, who, previously to her departure from Burgos, had signed a formal renunciation, written entirely by her own hand, of all her claims to the Spanish succession.* On her arrival at Bordeaux on the 21st of November, the young Queen was received with all the splendour of which the circumstances were susceptible, and the marriage ceremony was immediately repeated by the Bishop of Saintes; after which, on the 17th of December, the court,

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, p. 351.

under the escort of a strong body of troops, left the capital of Guienne for Tours, which latter city they did not, however, reach for five weeks, owing to the long halts that they were compelled to make in the several towns through which they passed, where every species of entertainment had been prepared for the reception of the august travellers. Meanwhile, the army suffered fearfully from exposure to the cold, from sickness, and from want of provisions and forage: numbers of the men died, and the progress of the royal party consequently resembled a disastrous retreat rather than a triumphant procession.

In addition to this misfortune the Queen-mother had other and still more serious motives for anxiety. Although her personal ambition had been gratified by the accomplishment of that close alliance with Spain which she had so long and so earnestly desired, she could not conceal from herself that as regarded the nation over which she had been called to govern, the irretrievable step thus taken was one of extreme impolicy. On every side she was surrounded by difficulty. The first prince of the blood, and nearly the whole of the high nobility, were not only disaffected, but actually in arms against the crown. The Protestants, to whom she had repeatedly promised that she would observe the Edict of Nantes, incensed by her breach of faith, had revolted against her authority; her troops had failed to offer any effective resistance; and

meanwhile foreign soldiers had traversed Champagne, and proceeded to Berry to join Condé, without any impediment from the royal army. The intelligence that she received from Paris was equally alarming; scarcely a day passed in which pamphlets and pasquinades of the grossest description were not published and circulated among the population, assigning the most foul and degrading motives for her journey to Guienne under the protection of the Dukes of Epernon and Guise; while her anxiety for the Spanish alliance was represented as arising from her desire to conciliate those who were accused as the assassins of her husband.

Angered as she was by these insults, Marie de Medicis still pined to return to the capital. She was wearied alike by the exacting and arrogant temper of M. d'Epernon, and by the monotony of the provincial cities, where she saw herself surrounded only by aldermen and citizens with whom she had no feeling or habit in common; and as the several individuals of her circle were equally ill at ease in so novel a position, far from allaying her impatience, they aggravated the *ennui* which she did not attempt to disguise, until she eventually brought herself to attach all the blame of her own futility and mortification upon those who had advised her to leave the capital; and to evince the greatest eagerness to follow the counsels of their adversaries.*

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 352—354

The court left Bordeaux at the close of the year 1615; and in the month of January following proceeded to take up its abode at Tours, there to await the close of a negociation into which the Queen-mother had entered with the princes; while at the same time her agents secretly exerted all their efforts to induce the allies of M. de Condé to abandon his cause. The command of the troops was taken from the Maréchal de Bois-Dauphin and conferred upon the Duke de Guise, with the title of lieutenant-general of the King's army; and an immediate attempt was made to gain over the Duke de Mayenne and the Maréchal de Bouillon, as being the most influential of the revolted nobles. James I. offered his services to Marie de Medicis as a mediator on the occasion, which were gratefully accepted; and the English ambassador was forthwith dispatched to the Prince de Condé at St. Jean-d'Angély, with instructions to avert, by every argument in his power, the horrors of a civil war. Convinced that no better opportunity could possibly occur for securing to himself and his party the advantageous conditions which he coveted, Condé received the royal envoy with great courtesy, declaring that he had acted throughout the whole affair solely in the interests of his country, and that he was ready to write respectfully to his Britannic Majesty, to offer to him the same assurance.

His proposal was accepted: the letter was forthwith prepared; and the Baron de Thianges was intrusted

with its delivery into the hands of the English monarch. A reply was returned by the same messenger; and finally a conference was decided on, which was to take place at Loudun on the 10th of February.*

While preparations were making for this important event, the Queen-mother, on the 29th of January, summoned the nobles of her court to her apartment, in order to discuss the necessary measures to be adopted to secure the allegiance of the disaffected princes; and on this occasion she nearly lost her life by a singular accident. The young Count de Soissons, the Dukes de Guise and d'Epernon, Bassompierre, Jeannin, and many others who held office about the court or in the government were scarcely assembled when the flooring of the room gave way, and twenty-eight persons were precipitated into the hall beneath. The arm-chair of Marie herself had fortunately been placed above a beam which held firm, and to which the President Jeannin resolutely clung, thus breaking his fall; but MM. de Soissons, d'Epernon, de Bassompierre, de Villeroy, and several others were less fortunate, and all were more or less gravely injured. With great presence of mind the Queen retained her seat; and with the help of the Duke de Guise ultimately contrived to reach her bed, over which she passed, and thus escaped into an adjoining apartment; and meanwhile the unfortunate

* Mercure Français, 1615. Rohan, Mém., Book 1. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 105, 106.

victims of the accident were conveyed to their respective residences, where her Majesty caused them to be immediately visited by one of the officers of her household, who was commissioned to inquire into their condition, and to express her regret at the event.

There was one exception, however, to this royal act of sympathy and consideration, and that one was the Duke d'Epernon; who, although the greatest sufferer on the occasion, was entirely overlooked; a marked and threatening want of courtesy on the part of the Queen-mother, which convinced the arrogant courtier that his period of favour was past, and that his enemies had triumphed. This conviction at once determined him to retire voluntarily from the court before he should be compelled to do so by an order which he felt satisfied would not be long delayed; and he was accordingly no sooner sufficiently recovered to leave his bed than he waited upon their Majesties to take leave, alleging that his shattered health having received so powerful a shock, he felt it necessary to withdraw for a time from all participation in public affairs, and to endeavour by perfect repose to overcome the effects of his accident.

His reasons were graciously accepted both by the King and Queen, who assured him of their deep sorrow at his sufferings, and expressed the most flattering wishes for his recovery; but the Queen-mother uttered no word either of regret or sympathy. With the most

chilling indifference she returned his parting salutation; and M. d'Epernon quitted her apartment with a demeanour almost as haughty as her own.*

Marie de Medicis, who possessed the most implicit confidence in the so-called science of astrology, and who was always anxious to penetrate the mystery of the future, having been informed on her return to Paris that a certain Georgio Luminelli, a native of Ragusa who was celebrated as a soothsayer, had recently arrived in the capital, and taken up his abode in the Place Royale, immediately expressed a wish to consult him; for which purpose she dispatched a messenger to his residence, by whom he was invited to wait upon a person of high rank who, attracted by his renown, was desirous to test his skill. To this somewhat imperious summons Luminelli, however, simply replied by declaring that he never quitted his own apartments for any one, whatever might be the station of the person who required his services; but that those who sought his aid were at liberty to visit him whenever they saw fit to do so. This answer only increased the eagerness of the Queen-mother; but, nevertheless, previously to seeking him in person, she requested M. de Créquy, the Duke de la Force, Bassompierre, and Rambure to go to his house in

* Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 498, 499. Vie du Duc d'Epernon, Book VII. Mercure Français, 1616. Bassompierre, Mém., p. 110.

disguise, in order to ascertain whether he were indeed worthy the reputation by which he had been preceded.

While they were making the necessary arrangements, and deciding to exchange dresses with their confidential valets in the hope of being enabled to mystify the necromancer, to whom they were entirely unknown, the Maréchal d'Ancre arrived to pay his respects to his royal mistress; and, upon being made acquainted with the project, he determined to join the party in the character of a Venetian noble, of whom there were at that moment several residing in Paris. On the completion of their preparations the merry masquers set forth, and soon reached the abode of Luminelli; where, on their arrival, they found a servant stationed at the door, as if awaiting the advent of expected guests, who no sooner saw them pause beside him than addressing Concini and the disguised serving-men, he politely requested them to follow him; coupling the invitation with an assurance that his master had desired him to watch for the arrival of five great nobles who were about to consult his art. Lavalée, the lacquey of M. de Bassompierre, assuming an air of importance, expressed both for himself and his companions their sense of this attention; and then, somewhat startled by the coincidence, for as such they simply considered it, the whole party followed their guide up stairs.

On reaching the apartment of the astrologer the four disguised courtiers remained respectfully upon the threshold, while their unliveried representatives advanced into the centre of the room; and courteously saluting their host, informed him that they had been induced by his great renown to solicit a display of his skill, and to claim from him a knowledge of their future fortunes. Lavalée was once more their spokesman; and the eyes of Luminelli remained fixed upon him until the conclusion of his address, when he turned away abruptly, without vouchsafing any reply, and drew back a curtain behind which was placed a large globe of polished steel. He looked earnestly upon this for a few moments; and then rising, he put on a cap of dark velvet which lay beside him, took Lavalée by the hand, and approaching Bassompierre placed his valet a few paces behind him, saying as he did so:

"Monseigneur, why should you thus have assumed a disguise? You are already a great noble, but your fortunes have not yet reached their acme. You will one day be Maréchal of France, and the dignity will be conferred upon you on the other side of the Rhône. Beauty has great influence over you; but with those whom you seek to please your purse has even more charms than your person. You will ere long have immense success at the gaming-table, far beyond any which you have yet achieved. You have been

engaged in a law-suit against an unmarried woman.* You hold one of the highest offices in the kingdom.† You are not by birth a Frenchman, but a German. One of the greatest ladies in the world will cause you considerable misfortune,‡ through the medium of a red animal.§ You will, however, finally triumph over your troubles, although the trial will be a long and a severe one."

Luminelli then consulted his magic globe a second time; led the lacquey of M. de Créquy to the rear of his master; made a profound salutation to the latter; and addressing him in his turn, detailed, as he had previously done in the case of Bassompierre, all the leading events of his past and future life. He next went through the same ceremony with the Duke de la Force and M. de Rambure; and ultimately he turned towards the Maréchal d'Ancre, exclaiming:

"You, Sir, are no Venetian, although you have sought to appear as such; but it would be well for you if you were so. As it is, if you will follow my advice, you will leave Paris to-morrow for Venice; as should you long delay your departure, it will be too

* Mademoiselle d'Entragues, who had endeavoured to compel Bassompierre to fulfil the promise of marriage which he had made to her.

† The colonel-generalship of the Swiss guards.

‡ The Princess de Conti, whom he privately married.

§ The Cardinal de Richelieu, who was exasperated at his marriage, and through whose agency Bassompierre incurred his subsequent disgrace and long imprisonment in the Bastille.

late to effect it. When you arrived in France you were alike poor and obscure, although you are now rich both in gold and honours. Leave the country, nevertheless, or these advantages will avail you nothing. With few exceptions, you are detested by all classes; and you would find your native air of Florence more wholesome than that of the country which you have adopted. You possess governments, and wield the *bâton* of a maréchal of France, but your tenure of these dignities is unstable; and you will do well to save yourself while you have yet the opportunity. You place your reliance on the favour of a crowned head, but that very favour shadows forth your ruin."

As Concini stood motionless before him, the astrologer took him by the hand, and leading him towards the globe, by a slight touch caused it to revolve. As he gazed upon the polished surface of the mysterious instrument, the colour of the Italian came and went so rapidly, that his companions believed him to be attacked by sudden indisposition; and depositing a heavy purse of gold upon the table, they urged him to withdraw. Before they could effect their object, however, Luminelli thrust the purse from him, having previously withdrawn from it a single pistole which he flung to his attendant. He then cast himself back upon his chair; the heavy curtain again fell before the globe; and he appeared totally unconscious of the continued presence of his visitors, whose departure was retarded for a few seconds by the utter incapacity of Concini to leave the room.

With a powerful effort the Italian however suddenly suppressed his emotion, although he still trembled so violently that he was compelled to lean upon Bassompierre for support; nor did the attack, as had been anticipated, yield to the influence of the external air, as the maréchal continued throughout the entire space of two hours wholly unable to control its violence; while not all the eager questioning of his companions could induce him to reveal the cause of his frightful agitation; a fact by which they were firmly persuaded that the astrologer had revealed to him an intimate acquaintance with past events which justified his warning, or had foreshadowed a future well calculated to arouse alarm.* Be this as it might, it appears at least certain that the five nobles were each and all deeply impressed by the scene through which they had just passed, by whatever agency it might have been effected; and that the report which they made on their return to Marie de Medicis effectually indisposed her from seeking any further knowledge of Georgio Luminelli.

* Rambure, MS. Mém., vol. vi, pp. 380—386.

CHAPTER VIII.

[1616.]

CONFERENCE OF LOUDUN—VENALITY OF THE PRINCES—MUTUAL CONCESSIONS—INDISPOSITION OF M. DE CONDÉ—HE SIGNS THE TREATY—CONCINI IS INSULTED BY A CITIZEN OF PARIS—THE COURT RETURN TO THE CAPITAL—SCHISM IN THE CABAL—THE SEALS ARE TRANSFERRED TO M. DU VAIR—DISGRACE OF THE MINISTERS—TRIUMPH OF CONCINI—MANGOT IS APPOINTED SECRETARY OF STATE, AND BARBIN MINISTER OF FINANCE—THE YOUNG SOVEREIGNS—COURT COSTUMES—ANNE OF AUSTRIA AND MARIE DE MEDICIS—PUERILITY OF LOUIS XIII.—THE MARÉCHAL DE BOUILLON AND THE DUKE DE MAYENNE RETURN TO COURT—THEY SEEK TO RUIN CONCINI—THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ EFFECTS A RECONCILIATION WITH THE QUEEN-MOTHER—JAMES I. SENDS AN EMBASSY TO PARIS TO NEGOCIATE A MARRIAGE BETWEEN THE PRINCE OF WALES AND THE PRINCESS CHRISTINE—GORGEOUS RECEPTION AT THE LOUVRE—COURT FESTIVITIES—CONCINI RETURNS TO PARIS—HE IS ABANDONED BY THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ—HE IS COMPELLED TO RETIRE—HIS FOREBODINGS — HE ENDEAVOURS TO INDUCE LEONORA TO LEAVE FRANCE—SHE REFUSES—INCREASING INFLUENCE OF DE LUYNES — DEATH OF MADEMOISELLE D'ANCRE—DESPAIR OF CONCINI—AMBITIOUS PROJECTS OF THE PRINCE DE CONDÉ—DEVOTION OF SULLY—HIS ADVICE IS DISREGARDED—POPULARITY OF CONDÉ—MARIE DE MEDICIS RESOLVES TO ARREST HIM—HE DISBELIEVES THE RUMOUR—THE OTHER PRINCES WITHDRAW FROM THE CAPITAL—THE KING IS INDUCED TO SANCTION THE ARREST—DISSIMULATION OF LOUIS XIII.—ARREST OF CONDÉ—FEARLESS REPLY OF M. DU VAIR—THE PRINCE IS CONVEYED TO THE BASTILLE—A BATCH OF MARSHALS — NOBLE DISINTERESTEDNESS OF BASSOMPIERRE — THE DOWAGER-PRINCESS DE CONDÉ ENDEAVOURS TO EXCITE THE POPULACE TO RESCUE HER SON—THE MOB PILLAGE THE HÔTEL OF THE MARÉCHAL D'ANCRE—THE QUEEN-MOTHER NEGOCIATES WITH THE GUISES—THE COUNCIL OF WAR—THE SEALS ARE TRANSFERRED FROM DU VAIR TO MANGOT — RICHELIEU IS APPOINTED SECRETARY OF STATE—CONCINI RETURNS TO COURT—THE MARÉCHALE D'ANCRE BECOMES PARTIALLY INSANE—POPULAR EXECRATION OF THE ITALIAN FAVOURITES—SUBTLE POLICY OF RICHELIEU—THREATENING ATTITUDE ASSUMED BY THE PRINCES.

CHAPTER VIII.

[1616.]

THE famous conference of Loudun assembled on the 13th of February, 1616; but as the Prince de Condé presented no less than thirty-one articles for consideration, many of which required careful examination, it was mutually agreed that the truce should be prolonged until the decision of his Majesty might be formed. The position of the court was, moreover, rendered more difficult from the fact that several great nobles, who had not hitherto openly espoused the faction of the rebels, hastened to swell their ranks, not with the intention of caballing against the government, but simply to be included in the concessions to which it was evident that the council would be compelled in order to accomplish a peace. Among others the Duke de Vendôme, who had so recently solicited his pardon, and declared his intention of adhering to the royal cause, was conspicuous in the ranks of the enemy; together with the young Duke de Candale, the son of d'Epernon, who had embraced

the reformed faith, the Duke de Piney-Luxembourg, and the dowager-Countess of Soissons, who withdrew from the court at Tours, and joined her son at Loudun. This example, contemptible as it was, proved contagious, and was followed by two of the greatest princesses of the blood, the dowagers of Condé and Longueville,* to the extreme annoyance of the Queen-mother, who was aware of the extent of their influence, and quite alive to its probable consequences.

Meanwhile both armies were suffering so severely from extreme cold and scarcity of provisions, that more than ten thousand men fell victims to exposure and famine; and the body-guard of the King became at length so much weakened that he found himself compelled to summon the Swiss under Bassompierre for the protection of his person.

The demands with which Condé and his partisans opened the conference were such as required little deliberation; but as the proceedings advanced they became more and more onerous; until, finally, as the council had foreseen, they all resolved themselves into questions of individual interest. The Duke de Longueville claimed full authority over all the fortresses in his government of Picardy which were held by the Maréchal d'Ancre, and refused to accede to any terms with the crown until they were given up; while the other princes and nobles asked either gratuities for themselves, or vengeance

* Conference of Loudun at the close of the Mém. of Philippeau de Pontchartrain, vol. vii, p. 315.

upon their enemies; and all agreed in claiming the payment of their troops by the royal treasury before they would consent to lay down their arms.*

Finally, on the 5th of May, the conference was closed; several of the articles presented by M. de Condé having been conceded, others deferred, and the remainder conditionally agreed to. In the meantime, however, the Prince had been taken seriously ill, and the fear that he might not survive so threatening an attack determined the leaders of his faction to accept whatever terms the court should decide to offer. While the disease was at its height, the princes and royal commissioners assembled about his bed, where the English ambassador also presented himself; but, although he had taken so active a part in the reconciliation about to be effected between the crown and the rebel nobles, M. de Villeroy vehemently refused to permit him to remain, declaring that upon such an occasion it was impossible to allow a foreigner to interfere between a sovereign and his subjects. This dispute was followed by a second, the deputies of La Rochelle having demanded a continuance of their assembly; a demand which was opposed with such warmth and violence that M. de Condé, unable to support the disturbance, weakened as he was by the fever which preyed upon him, commanded instant silence; and desiring that a pen might be brought to him, together with the edict of pacification which had been drawn up, he forthwith affixed his signature to the

* Richelieu, Mem., vol. vii, p. 287. Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 450.

document, declaring that those who loved him would do the same, while such as refused to follow his example should be compelled to do so. He then pronounced a short prayer, in which he thanked God for the cessation of hostilities, after which he desired to be left alone; and on the morrow preparations were commenced for disbanding the rebel troops.*

This apparent precipitation did not, however, involve any sacrifice either on the part of the Prince himself or on that of his principal adherents, since Richelieu has recorded that the peace for which M. de Condé so piously uttered his thanksgiving, cost Louis XIII. upwards of six millions of livres;† every individual of mark having cause to feel satisfied with the result of the conference save the Protestants, who, as a body, derived no benefit whatever from the treaty.‡

Concini, who had remained in Paris during the absence of the court, had meanwhile been subjected to a mortification which to his haughty spirit far exceeded a more important evil. The citizens who had continued to keep watch and ward, despite the cessation of hostilities that had taken place, persevered in requiring that all who entered or quitted the capital should be provided with passports; a formality with which the arrogant Italian considered it unnecessary

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 509. Richelieu, Mém., Book VII, p. 288. Pontchartrain, Conference de Loudun, p. 406. Rohan, Mém., p. 134. D'Estrées, Mém., p. 411.

† Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. ii, p. 14.

‡ Sismondi, vol. xxii, p. 361.

to comply; and, accordingly, when on one occasion he was about to proceed to his house in the faubourg attended by some of the gentlemen of his suite, he had no sooner reached the Porte de Bussy where a shoemaker named Picard was on guard, than this man compelled his carriage to stop, and demanded his passport. Enraged by such a mark of disrespect the maréchal imperiously ordered his coachman to proceed, but this was rendered impossible by the threatening attitude of the well-armed guardian of the gate.

"Rascal!" shouted Concini, showing himself at the door of the carriage; "do you know who I am?"

"Right well, Sir;" was the unmoved reply; "and nevertheless you shall not stir a step beyond the walls without a passport."

The Italian was pale with indignation, but he dared not resent the insult, as a crowd was rapidly collecting from whom he was aware that he could expect no mercy; and he accordingly restrained himself sufficiently to dispatch a messenger for an order of egress which promptly arrived. His southern blood, however, beat and burnt in his veins, and he awaited only an opportunity of revenge. A few days subsequently, unable any longer to control his rage, he desired his equerry to proceed to the residence of Picard with two valets, and to repay his insolence by a sound cudgelling; an order which was so implicitly obeyed, that the unfortunate shoemaker narrowly escaped with his life; while a mob, attracted by the uproar, seized the two serving-men, who, confiding

in the power of their master, treated their menaces with contempt, and hanged them before the door of the house in which they had committed the outrage. The equerry, who had also fallen into the hands of the populace, was put upon his trial, and it was only by means of a heavy bribe that the discomfited maréchal, alarmed by what had taken place, was enabled to induce Picard to withdraw his accusation against him.*

At the close of the conference of Loudun the court returned to Paris, where the reception of their Majesties was enthusiastic, while that of Marie de Medicis was cold and constrained, although it was well known that M. de Condé had all but obtained the presidency of the council, and that the Queen-mother had made other concessions which she had previously repelled with considerable haughtiness at Tours; such as granting to the Duke de Longueville the exclusive authority in Picardy, which deprived the Maréchal d'Ancre of his cherished fortresses; while on the other hand, despite the advantages which they had reaped from the weakness of the government, the discontented nobles had separated in no better spirit. The Dukes of Rohan and Sully loudly complained that they had been deceived by the Prince; M. de Longueville, who had vainly sought to obtain the government of Normandy, and who was afraid to return to Picardy until convinced that he had nothing to fear from the resentment of the Maréchal d'Ancre, considered himself aggrieved; and such, in short, was the general jealousy

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 514.

and distrust exhibited by the lately coalesced nobles that, with the exception of the Duke de Mayenne and the Maréchal de Bouillon, who found themselves involved in one common interest—that of destroying the influence of the Dukes of Epernon and Bellegarde —the whole of the late cabal appeared by mutual consent to have become inimical to each other.*

On the arrival of the court at Paris, the seals were taken from the chancellor, and delivered into the keeping of Guillaume du Vair, who was at that period in his sixtieth year, on the pretext that so important a charge must be oppressive to M. de Sillery at his advanced age; a subterfuge which could not have failed to excite the discontent of the people had they not distrusted his cupidity as much as Marie was wearied of his services. Certain it is, however, that his dismissal occasioned no regret, and was speedily forgotten.† Villeroy and Jeannin were the immediate agents of his dismissal from office, as they ascribed to him their own previous discredit at court, and had long been secretly labouring to repay him in kind; but their triumph was destined to be short-lived. Concini had effected the disgrace of his old and hated rival the Duke d'Epernon; and that feat accomplished, he next resolved to rid himself of the two veteran ministers who were the most formidable stumbling-blocks upon his path of ambition. Aware of the distrustful nature of the Queen-mother,

* D'Estrées, Mém., p. 411.

† Sismondi, vol. xxii, p. 363.

whose experience had made her suspicious of all by whom she was surrounded, he at once decided upon his plan of action; and it was not long ere he induced her to believe that they had acted in the interests of the Prince de Condé, rather than her own, during the conference of Loudun; while such apparent proofs did he adduce of this assertion, that once more Marie de Medicis consented to exclude them from the council.

This was the moment for which the Italian favourite had so long sighed. From the death of Henry IV. he had exerted all his energies to overthrow the princes of the blood, and to replace the old ministers by creatures of his own; but so hopeless did the attempt appear that more than once he had despaired of ultimate success. Now, however, he found himself pre-eminent; the Queen-mother, harassed and worn-out by the cabals which were incessantly warring against her authority, and threatening her tenure of power, threw herself with eagerness into the hands of the adventurer who owed all to her favour, and implicitly followed his advice, in the hope that she might thus escape the machinations of her enemies. Mangot,* whose devotion to the Maréchal d'Ancre was notorious, was appointed secretary of state, in which dignity he replaced M. de Puisieux;†

* Claude Mangot, president of the Parliament of Bordeaux, and assistant-secretary of state.

† Pierre Brulart, Seigneur de Puisieux, son of Nicolas Brulart, Seigneur de Sillery and de Puisieux in Champagne, Chancellor of France, was secretary of state. In 1622 he took Montpellier, and died in 1640.

while the administration of finance was conferred upon M. Barbin,* although Jeannin nominally retained office.†

While these changes were convulsing the cabinet, irritating the great nobles, and exciting the apprehensions of all those who desired the welfare of the nation, the young sovereigns whom they more immediately concerned were either ignorant or careless of their consequences. The girl-Queen, surrounded by her Spanish attendants, spent her time in the enjoyment of the pleasures congenial to her age. According to Madame de Motteville,‡ she was strikingly handsome, but rather

* M. Barbin was comptroller of the household of the Queen-mother. "A man of little consequence," says Philippeau de Pontchartrain; "but upright, and well versed in business."

† Rohan, Mém., Book 1. Mém. de la Régence de Marie de Medicis.

‡ Françoise Bertaut, Lady of Motteville, was the daughter of Pierre Bertaut, gentleman in ordinary of the bedchamber, and of Louise Bessin de Mathonville, of the Spanish family of Saldagna. At the age of fifteen she married Nicolas Langlois, Seigneur de Motteville, a man already advanced in years, but with whom she lived happily until 1641, when she was left a widow with a very slender jointure. Two years subsequently, at the age of twenty-two, she entered the household of Anne of Austria, rather as a personal friend than as an official attendant; a post which she retained for many years with honour; her sweetness of disposition and total absence of ambition causing her to be respected by all parties. She was present at the death of her royal mistress, who, by a bequest of ten thousand crowns, enabled her to quit the court, and to devote her whole attention to the revision of her well-known Memoirs. Intimately acquainted with Mesdames de

Austrian than Spanish in her style of beauty, with an abundance of fair hair which she wore in ringlets about her face. On her arrival in France she retained the national costume; and discarding the tapestried chests common at the period, made use of a pile of cushions as her seat. The Marquise de Morny (quoted by Mádame de Motteville) described her on the occasion of her own presentation as reclining upon this Moorish sofa in the midst of her attendants, habited in a dress of green satin embroidered with gold and silver, with large hanging sleeves looped together at intervals by diamond buttons; a close ruff; and a small cap of green velvet with a black heron-feather.*

At once regal and elegant as such a costume must have been, it is deplorable to contrast it with those which she adopted in after-years, when the most monstrous caprices were permitted at her court; and when it was by no means uncommon to see women of the highest rank about to ride on horseback, present themselves in the royal circle in dresses reaching only to the knee, with their legs encased in tight pantaloons of velvet, or even in complete *haut-de-chausses;* while the habitual attire of the sex was equally *bizarre* and exaggerated. There were the *vasquines* or rollers which

la Fayette and de Sévigny, she for some time maintained a constant intercourse with both; but on the termination of her self-imposed task, she retired to the convent of Ste. Marie de Chaillot, where she died on the 29th of December, 1689.

* Motteville, Mém., édition Petitot, vol. i, pp. 336, 337.

encircled the waist and extended the folds of the petticoats, thus giving additional smallness to the waist; the *brassards-à-chevrons* or metallic braces for expanding the sleeves; and the *affiquet* of pearls or diamonds coquettishly attached to the left breast, and entitled the *assassin*. Added to these absurdities there were, moreover, bows of ribbon, each of which had its appropriate name and position; the *galant* was placed on the summit of the head; the *mignon* on the heart; the *favori* under and near the *assassin;* and the *badin* on the handle of the fan. Short curls upon the temples were designated *cavaliers;* ringlets were *garçons;* while a hundred other inanities of the same description compelled the great ladies of the period to adopt a slang which was perfectly unintelligible to all save the initiated; and when we add to these details the well-authenticated fact that the royal apartments were fumigated with powdered tobacco (then a recent and costly importation into France), in lieu of the perfumes which had previously been in use for the same purpose, it will scarcely be denied that caprice rather than taste dictated the habits of the court under Louis XIII.

To revert, however, to the earlier years of Anne of Austria, it would appear that the troubles of the royal bride did not await her womanhood. Like Marie de Medicis, she clung to all which appeared to link her to her distant home, and caused her to forget for a time that it was hers no longer; and under this impulse it was by no means surprising that she attached herself

with girlish affection to the individuals by whom she had been followed in her splendid exile; but, even as her predecessor had been compelled to forego the society of her native attendants, so was Anne of Austria in her turn deprived of the solace of their presence. With the exception of Doña Estefania, her first waiting-woman, to whom she was tenderly attached, and who had been about her person from her infancy, all were dismissed by Marie de Medicis; who, anxious to retain her authority over the wife of her son, dreaded the influence of her Spanish followers.

Nor was this her only disappointment. We have already shown with what eagerness she looked forward to her first meeting with her intended bridegroom, whose grave but manly beauty so fully realised all her hopes, that, as she ingeniously confessed, she could have loved him tenderly had he possessed a heart to bestow upon her in return; but she soon discovered that such was not the case; and that Louis XIII. saw in her nothing more interesting than a Princess who was worthy by her rank and quality to share with him the throne of France.

This was a sad discovery for a lovely girl of fifteen years of age, who had anticipated nothing less than devotion on the part of a young husband by whom she had been so eagerly met on her arrival; nor did she fail to contrast his coldness with the ill-disguised admiration of many of his great nobles, and to weep over the wreck of her fondest and fairest visions. But, young and

high-spirited, she struggled against the isolation of spirit to which she was condemned; and probably resented with more bitterness the coercion to which she was subjected by the iron rule of her royal mother-in-law than even the coldness of the husband to whom she had been prepared to give up her whole heart.*

Louis, on his side, although the sovereign of a great nation, was also exposed to privations; merely physical, it is true, but still sufficiently irritating to increase his natural moroseness and discontent. While the Maréchal d'Ancre displayed at court a profusion and splendour which amounted to insolence, the young King was frequently without the means of indulging the mere caprices common to his age; but although he murmured, and even at times appeared to resent, the neglect with which he was treated, he easily consoled himself in the puerile sports which frittered away his existence; and attended by de Luynes and his brothers, found constant occupation in waging war against small birds, and in training their captors. In such pursuits he was moreover encouraged by the Queen-mother and her favourites; who, anxious to retain their power, did not make any effort to awaken him to a sense of what he owed to himself and to the kingdom over which he had been called upon to rule. The only occasions upon which he appeared to feel the slightest pleasure in the society of his beautiful young wife was when he engaged her to share in his rides and hawking-parties, in order to excite

* Motteville, Mém., vol. i, p. 337.

her admiration of his skill; an admiration of which Anne was lavish, as she trusted by flattering his vanity to awaken his affection; while she moreover enjoyed, with all the zest of girlhood, so agreeable an escape from the etiquette and formalities of a court life.

The treaty of Loudun was no sooner concluded than the revolted nobles separated, each dissatisfied with the other, and all murmuring at the insufficiency of the recompense by which their several concessions had been met. The Prince de Condé, on his convalescence, withdrew to Berry, which government had been given to him in exchange for that of Guienne; Sully retired to Poitou, and the Duke de Rohan returned to La Rochelle; while of all the lately disaffected leaders the Maréchal de Bouillon and the Duke de Mayenne alone proceeded to court, in order to claim the immunities promised in requital of their secession from the interests of the Prince de Condé. The King and the two Queens were residing at the Louvre on their arrival, where they had every reason to be satisfied with their reception; and the Maréchal d'Ancre, who, terrified by the undisguised hostility of the Parisians, had not ventured to accompany his royal mistress, no sooner ascertained the return of the two nobles to the capital than he hastened to make them the most brilliant offers in the event of their consenting to espouse his interests. Neither the maréchal nor the duke were, however, disposed to second his views, and only profited by his advances to swell the ranks of his enemies. This was

a task of comparatively slight difficulty, as all classes n the kingdom considered themselves aggrieved by his unparalleled prosperity; and thus, ere long, the Duke de Guise was prevailed upon to join the new cabal, into which it was only further deemed necessary to enlist M. de Condé. Bouillon, who possessed great influence over the Prince, exerted himself strenuously to prevent his return to court, in order to increase his own consequence in the estimation of the Queen-mother; but his efforts proved ineffectual, as M. de Condé believed it to be more compatible with his own interests to effect a reconciliation with the crown; and, acting upon this impression, he pledged himself to support Concini, on condition that he should be appointed chief of the council of finance, and take a share in the government. His proposal was accepted, and to the great annoyance of M. de Bouillon, the Prince once more appeared at court. His reception by the citizens was however so enthusiastic that Marie de Medicis became alarmed, until she was assured by Richelieu, then the open and zealous ally of the Maréchal d'Ancre, that the King had nothing to fear from a popularity which would only tend to render M. de Condé a more efficient ally; an assurance which afforded so much gratification to the Queen-mother, that she repaid it by appointing the Bishop de Luçon almoner to the young Queen; and shortly afterwards councillor of state.*

* Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 111, 112. Sismondi, vol. xxii, p. 365.

Ten days subsequently to the return of M. de Condé to Paris, a new embassy arrived from James I., to renew the negociation of marriage between the Prince of Wales and Madame Christine of France, upon which occasion the court of Louis XIII. displayed all its magnificence; without, however, eclipsing that of the English nobles to whom the embassy had been intrusted. The hôtel of the late Queen Marguerite was prepared for their reception, where they were visited by all the great nobles and foreign ministers; and finally, on the following Sunday, they were received in state at the Louvre. Lord Hay, (afterwards Earl of Carlisle,) was the accredited ambassador; while Mr. Rich, (subsequently Lord Holland,) Goring, and other individuals of mark, contributed to increase the splendour and importance of his mission.

Nothing could be more sumptuous than the spectacle which was presented by the Louvre upon this occasion. The halls and galleries were alike thronged by all that was noble and beautiful at the court of France. Princes of the blood, nobles, marshals, and prelates, were mingled with the great ladies of the household in their state dresses, rustling in silks, velvets, and cloth of gold and silver, and glittering with diamonds. Amid this galaxy of magnificence the Queen-mother shone conspicuous. Still remarkable for her stately beauty and dignified deportment, she had left no means untried to enhance their effect, and she had been eminently successful. She was attired in a long robe of amaranth

velvet, of which the wide and open sleeves were slashed with white satin, and looped together by large pearls, save at the wrists and elbows, where they were fastened by immense brilliants. Her ruff of rich Alençon lace rose half a foot in height at the back of her neck, whence it decreased in breadth until it reached her bosom, which was considerably exposed, according to the fashion of the period. A coronet of diamonds surmounted her elaborately curled hair, which was drawn back, so as to exhibit in its full dimensions her broad and lofty brow; and the most costly jewels were scattered over her whole attire, which gave back their many-coloured lights at every movement of her person.

The Prince de Joinville, the Dukes de Guise and d'Elbœuf, the Marquises de Rosny and de Créquy, and M. de Bassompierre, accompanied by a numerous train of nobles, escorted the English envoys to the palace; while more than fifty thousand persons crowded the streets through which the glittering train was compelled to pass.

During the following week Paris was the scene of perpetual gaiety and splendour. All the princes and great nobles vied with each other in the magnificence of the balls, banquets, and other entertainments, which were given in honour of their distinguished guests.* Presents of considerable value were exchanged; and the British ambassador had every reason to anticipate the

* Matthieu, Hist. des Derniers Troubles, Book III, p. 577.

favourable termination of his mission; but subsequent circumstances compelled him to abstain from seeking a definitive reply.*

The arrival of M. de Condé in Paris, and the pledge given by that Prince to support him with his influence, determined Concini once more to hazard his own return to the capital under the escort of Bassompierre; but he found the popular irritation still so great against him, that when he visited the Prince he was accompanied by a suite of a hundred horse. His reception by his new ally was, moreover, less cordial than he had hoped; for Condé had already began to repent his promise, and to feel apprehensive that by upholding the interests of the Italian favourite he should lose his own popularity. He also believed that the amount of power which he had at length succeeded in securing, must render him independent of such a coalition; and he resolved to seize the earliest opportunity of impressing upon Concini the unpalatable fact.

This opportunity soon presented itself. On the 14th of August, the Prince gave a banquet to the English envoy, which was attended by all the principal nobility of the court, but from which the Maréchal d'Ancre had been excluded. While the guests were still at table, however, Concini, on the pretext of paying his respects to Lord Hay, entered the banqueting-hall, attended by thirty of those gentlemen of his

* Bassompierre, Mém., pp. 113, 114.

thirty of those gentlemen of his household whom he arrogantly called his *coions di mille franchi.**

He had no sooner seated himself than Mayenne, Bouillon, and others of the cabal which had been formed against him, proposed that so favourable an opportunity should not be lost of taking his life, and thus ridding the country of the incubus by which it had so long been oppressed in the person of an insolent foreigner; but the project was no sooner communicated to M. de Condé than he imperatively forbade all violence beneath his own roof; and thus Concini, who, although he did not fail to perceive by what was taking place about him, that he had placed himself in jeopardy by thus braving his enemies, but who nevertheless maintained the most perfect self-possession, was suffered to depart in safety. On the following morning, however, he received a communication from the Prince, who, after assuring him that he had experienced great difficulty in restraining the princes and nobles into whose presence he had forced himself on the preceding day, from executing summary justice upon him, in order to avenge their several wrongs; and that they had, moreover, threatened to abandon his own cause should he persist in according his protection to an individual whom they were resolved

* The Maréchal d'Ancre had formed a large establishment by engaging in his service a number of impoverished French nobles, whose necessities had induced them to accept a thousand livres a year, and to submit to the insults which were heaped upon them by their low-born patron.

to pursue even to the death, concluded by declaring that it would thenceforward be impossible for him to maintain the pledge which he had given; and advising him to lose no time in retiring to Normandy, of which province he was lieutenant-general.*

Although exasperated by the bad faith of M. de Condé, Concini was nevertheless compelled to follow this interested suggestion; but, before he left the field open to his enemies, he resolved to strike a parting blow; and he had accordingly no sooner dismissed the messenger of the Prince than he proceeded to the Louvre, where, while taking leave of the Queen-mother, he eagerly impressed upon her that she was alike deceived by Condé, and trifled with by Bouillon, and that all the members of their faction were agreed to divest her of her authority; an attempt of which the result could only be averted by the seizure of their persons.†

It is probable, however, that even despite the avowed abandonment of the Prince de Condé, Concini might have hesitated to quit his post, had not the affair of Picard convinced him that his prosperity had reached its climax. Even the Queen-mother, indignant as she expressed herself at the insult to which he had been subjected, betrayed no inclination to resent it; and so entire was his conviction that his overthrow was at hand, that there can be no doubt but that thence-

* Bassompierre, Mém., p. 114. D'Estrées, Mém., p. 413. Richelieu, Hist. de la Mère et du Fils, vol. ii, p. 57.

† Rohan, Mém., p. 141.

forward he began seriously to meditate a return to his own country.*

Nearly at the moment in which the Maréchal d'Ancre was thus unexpectedly compelled to leave Paris, his untiring enemy the Duke de Longueville made himself master of the three towns of Peronne, Roye, and Montdidier in Picardy, which, by the treaty of Loudun, had been secured to Concini. Publicly the princes blamed this violation of the treaty, and exhorted the duke to relinquish his conquests; but being in reality delighted that places of this importance, and moreover, so immediately in the neighbourhood of the capital, should be in the possession of one of their own allies, they privately sent to him both men and money to enable him to retain them.†

Meanwhile Marie de Medicis made no effort to compel the restitution of the captured towns; the insult to which he had been subjected by Picard remained unavenged; and Concini could no longer conceal from himself that he had outlived his fortunes. It is scarcely doubtful, moreover, that with the superstition common to the period, the prediction of Luminelli had pressed heavily upon his mind; as from that period he became anxious to abandon the French court, and to retire with his enormous wealth to his native city. It was in vain, however, that he sought to inspire Leonora with the

* Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 514.

† Sismondi, vol. xxii, p. 371, 372. D'Estrées, Mém., p. 412. Bassompierre, Mem., p. 114. Mezeray, vol. xi, pp. 113, 114.

same desire; in vain that he represented the prudence of taking the initiative while there was yet time; the foster-sister of Marie de Medicis peremptorily refused to leave Paris, alleging that it would be cowardly to abandon her royal mistress at a period when she was threatened alike by the ambition of the Prince de Condé and the inimity of de Luynes, whose power over the mind of the young sovereign was rapidly making itself felt.

At this precise moment a new and grave misfortune tended to augment the eagerness of the Maréchal d'Ancre to carry out his project. His daughter, through whose medium he had looked to form an alliance with some powerful family, and thus to fortify his own position, was taken dangerously ill, and in a few days breathed her last. His anguish was ungovernable; and while his wife wept in silence beside the body of her dead child, he, on the contrary, abandoned himself to the most vehement exclamations; strangely mingling his expressions of fear for his future fate with regret for the loss which he had thus sustained.

"Seignor;" he replied vehemently to Bassompierre who vainly attempted to console him; "I am lost; Seignor, I am ruined; Seignor, I am miserable. I regret my daughter, and shall do so while I live; but I could support this affliction, did I not see before me the utter ruin of myself, my wife, my son, and my whole house, in the obstinacy of Leonora. Were you not aware of my whole history I should perhaps be less frank, but you know that when I arrived in France, far from owning

a single sous, my debts amounted to eight hundred crowns; now we possess more than a million in money, with landed property and houses in France, three hundred thousand crowns at Florence, and a similar sum in Rome. I do not speak of the fortune accumulated by my wife; but surely we may be satisfied to exist for the remainder of our lives upon the proceeds of our past favour. Had you not been well-informed of my previous life I might seek to disguise it from you, but you cannot have forgotten that you saw me at Florence steeped in debauchery, frequently in prison, more than once in exile, generally without resources, and continually lost in disorder and excess. Here, on the contrary, I have acquired alike honour, wealth, and favour, and I would fain disappoint my enemies by leaving the country without disgrace; but the maréchale is impracticable; and were it not that I should be guilty of ingratitude in separating my fortunes from those of a woman to whom I owe all that I possess, I would forthwith leave the country, and secure my own safety and that of my son."*

The allusion made by Concini to the growing ambition of the Prince de Condé was unfortunately not destitute of foundation; and suspicions were rapidly gaining ground that he meditated nothing less than a transfer of the crown of France to his own brow, on the pretext that the marriage of Henry IV. with the Tuscan princess was invalid, his former wife being

* Bassompierre, Mém., pp. 121, 122.

still alive, and his hand, moreover, solemnly pledged to the Marquise de Verneuil. On more than one occasion when he had feasted his friends, their glasses had been emptied amid cries of *Barre à bas ;* a toast which was interpreted as intended to signify the suppression of the bar-sinister which the shield of Condé bore between its three *fleurs-de-lis.** Neither Sully, who had recently returned to court, nor the Duke de Guise, could be induced to join in so criminal a faction; and the former had no sooner been informed of the dangerous position of the King than, dissatisfied as he was by the treatment which he had personally received, he demanded an audience of the young sovereign and his mother, in order to warn them of their peril. In vain, however, did Marie, touched by this proof of loyal devotedness, urge him to suggest a remedy.

"I am no longer in office, Madam;" he replied proudly; "and you have your chosen councillors about you. I have done my duty, and leave it to others to do theirs."

He then made his parting obeisance, and had already reached the door of the apartment, leaving the Queen-mother in a state of agitation and alarm which she made no effort to disguise, when suddenly pausing upon the threshold, he once more turned towards her, saying impressively:

* Richelieu, Book VII, p. 333. Fontenay-Mareuil, pp. 338—358.

"Sire, and you, Madam, I beg your Majesties to reflect upon what I have said; my conscience is now at rest. Would to God, that you were in the midst of twelve hundred horse; I can see no other alternative." And without awaiting any reply, he then withdrew.*

The advice of the veteran minister appeared, however, to the friends of the Queen-mother too dangerous to be followed. France had so recently been delivered from the horrors of a civil war that it was deemed inexpedient to provoke its renewal by any hostile demonstration on the part of the crown; while, moreover, the popularity of Condé was so notorious that no doubt could be entertained of his success should the *ultima ratio regum* be adopted. His influence was alike powerful with all classes; the people were unanimous in his cause; the princes and great nobles were his zealous adherents; and since his entrance into the council as its president, not contented by dividing his authority with the Queen-mother he had gradually absorbed it in his own person. His hôtel was crowded by those who formerly thronged the apartments of the Louvre; all who had demands to make, or remonstrances to offer, addressed themselves only to him; and thus he had become too dangerous an enemy to be lightly opposed.†

Under these circumstances it appeared impossible to proceed openly against him, while it was equally essential to deliver the crown from so formidable an

* Richelieu, Book VII, p. 326.

† Sismondi, vol. xxii, p. 374.

adversary; his arrest offered the only opportunity of effecting so desirable a result, but even to accomplish this with safety was by no means facile. In his own house he was surrounded by friends and adherents who would have rendered such an attempt useless; and after mature deliberation it was accordingly agreed that he must be made prisoner in the Louvre.

Under a specious pretext the Swiss guards were detained in the great court of the palace; the Marquis de Thémines* undertook to demand the sword of the Prince, and to secure his person, volunteering at the same time to procure the assistance of his two sons, and seven or eight nobles upon whose fidelity he could rely; arms were introduced into one of the apartments of the Queen-mother in a large chest, which was understood to contain costly stuffs from Italy; and a number of the youngest and most distinguished noblemen of the court, to whom Marie appealed for support, took a solemn oath of obedience to her behests, without inquiring into the nature of the service to which they were thus pledged.

All being in readiness, Bassompierre was awakened at three o'clock in the morning of the 1st of September by a gentleman of the Queen-mother's household, and instructed to proceed immediately to the Louvre in disguise. On his arrival he found Marie only half-dressed, seated between Mangot and Barbin, and

* Ponce de Lausière, Marquis de Thémines, Sénéchal de Quercy, and subsequently Marshal of France.

evidently in a state of extraordinary agitation and excitement. As he entered the apartment, she said hurriedly:

"You are welcome, Bassompierre. You do not know why I have summoned you so early; I will shortly explain my reason."

Then, rising from her seat, she paced to and fro across the floor for nearly half an hour, no one venturing to break in upon her reverie. Suddenly, however, she paused, and beckoning to her companions to follow her, she entered her private closet; and the hangings no sooner fell behind the party than, turning once more towards him, she continued with bitter vehemence:

"I am about to arrest the Prince, together with the Dukes of Vendôme, Mayenne, and Bouillon. Let the Swiss guards be on the spot by eleven o'clock as I proceed to the Tuileries, for should I be compelled by the people to leave Paris, I wish them to accompany me to Nantes. I have secured my jewels, and forty thousand golden crowns, and I shall take my children with me, if, which I pray God may not be the case, and as I do not anticipate, I find myself under the necessity of leaving the capital; for I am resolved to submit to every sort of peril and inconvenience rather than lose my own authority, or endanger that of the King."*

* Bassompierre, Mém., p. 117.

The final arrangements were then discussed; and Marie de Medicis was left to her own thoughts until the hour of eight, when M. de Thémines was announced.

"Ha! you are come at length;" she exclaimed joyfully; "I was awaiting you with impatience. The council is about to open, and it is time that we were all prepared. Can you depend on those by whom you are accompanied?"

"They are my sons, Madam."

"Bravely answered!" said Marie forcing a smile, as she extended her hand, which the marquis raised to his lips. "Go then, and remember that the fate of France and of her monarch are in your keeping."

Although surrounded by devoted friends, the Queen-mother was agitated by a thousand conflicting emotions. She was well aware that her own future existence as a Queen hung upon the success or failure of her enterprise, as should the slightest indiscretion on the part of any of her agents arouse the suspicions of the Prince, and induce him to leave the capital, he had every prospect of obtaining the crown. Moreover, MM. de Créquy and de Bassompierre, who were in command of the French and Swiss guards, and who had received orders to draw up their men in order of battle at the great gate of the Louvre immediately that the Prince should have entered, and to arrest him did he attempt to leave the palace, became alarmed at the responsibility thus thrust upon them, and declined to

comply with these instructions until they had received a warranty to that effect under the great seal; but this demand having been conceded, they hesitated no longer.* All the precautions which had been taken nevertheless failed in some degree in their effect, as the Duke de Mayenne and the Maréchal de Bouillon were apprised by their emissaries of the unusual movements of the court, and at once adopted measures of safety. Bouillon feigned an indisposition, and refused to leave his hôtel, where, after a long interview with the duke, it was resolved that Condé should be warned not to trust himself in the power of the Queen-mother. The Prince, however, who had been lulled into false security by the specious representations of Barbin, treated their caution with contempt, being unable to believe that Marie would venture to attempt any violence towards himself.

"If there be, indeed, any hostile intention on the part of the crown," he said disdainfully; "it probably regards M. de Bouillon, whose restless spirit excites the alarm of the Queen-mother. Let him look to himself, if he see fit to do so. Should he be committed to the Bastille my interests will not suffer."

Angered by his presumption, the two friends made no further protest, but contented themselves with redoubling their own precautions. Bouillon retired to Charenton with a strong escort, while the Duke de Mayenne remained quietly in his hôtel, having made the neces-

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 375, 376.

sary preparations for instant flight, should such a step become essential to his safety.*

Meanwhile at the Louvre nothing remained to be done but to communicate to the young King the project which was about to be realised, and to induce him to sanction it by his countenance; an attempt which offered little difficulty, the jealousy of Louis having been excited by the assumed authority of the Prince, and his dissimulating nature gratified by this first participation in a state intrigue.

At ten o'clock a great clamour upon the quay near the gate of the palace attracted the attention of the Queen-mother, who commanded silence; and in another moment distinct cries of "Long live the Prince!" "Long live M. de Condé!" were heard in the apartment. Marie de Medicis rose from her seat and approached an open window, followed by the Maréchale d'Ancre.

"The Prince is about to open the council;" said Leonora with a bitter smile.

"Rather say the King of France;" replied Marie with a flushed cheek, as she saw Condé graciously receiving the petitions which were tendered to him on all sides; "But his royalty shall be like that of the bean;† it shall not last long."‡

* Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 541, 542. Mém. de la Régence de Marie de Medicis.

† On Twelfth-Night a bean is introduced in France into the cake, and the person selecting the slice in which it has been concealed is elected king for the evening.

‡ Bassompierre, Mém., p. 117.

When he alighted at the palace Condé proceeded to the hall of council, which was on the ground-floor; and at the termination of the sitting ascended, as was his custom, to the apartments of the Queen-mother, where Louis, who had entered eagerly into the part that had been assigned to him, and who had just distributed with his own hands the arms which had been prepared for the followers of M. de Thémines, met him in the gallery; entered into a cheerful conversation; and, finally, invited him to join a hawking-party which was to take place within an hour. Condé, however, whose thoughts were otherwise engaged, declined to participate in the offered pastime; and the young King, having accomplished all that had been required of him, accepted his excuses, and returned to the apartment of his mother. At the same moment Thémines and his two sons issued from a small passage, and, approaching the Prince, announced that they had received an order to arrest him.

"Arrest me!" exclaimed Condé in astonishment. "It is impossible!"

"Such are my instructions"—said the marquis, as he extended his hand to receive the forfeited sword, while his two sons placed themselves on each side of the prisoner.

"You are aware that I am the first prince of the blood."

"I know, Monseigneur, the respect which is your due;" was the reply; "but I must obey the King."

"I must see their Majesties," persisted the Prince.

"It is impossible. Come, Sir, suffer me to conduct you to the apartment to which I have been directed to escort you."

"How!" vehemently exclaimed Condé, looking round upon the nobles who were collected in the hall of which he had just reached the entrance, "is there no one here who has sufficient courage to spare me this outrage? You, Monsieur;" he continued, addressing himself to du Vair; "you at least I know to be a man of probity. Did you counsel this violation of all the solemn promises which have been made to me?"

"I was not consulted upon the subject, Monseigneur;" replied the keeper of the seals; "nor shall it be my fault if so grievous an error be not speedily redeemed. The more brief the folly the better the result."

This imprudent retort was destined to seal the disgrace of the upright minister without serving the Prince; who, seeing that he had nothing to anticipate from any demonstration on the part of the assembled nobles, haughtily desired his captor to conduct him to his allotted prison.* "And when you have done so," he added in a firm voice, as he swept the apartment with an eye as bright and as steady as though he had not stood there unarmed and a captive; "you may tell the Queen-

* Rohan, Mém., p. 141. Fontenay-Mareuil, p. 350. D'Estrées, p. 414. Le Vassor, vol. i, pp. 542, 543. Brienne, Mém., vol. i, pp. 315, 316.

mother that she has anticipated me only by three days; for had she waited beyond that time, the King would no longer have had a crown upon his head."*

The Prince was then conducted by a back staircase to an upper chamber strongly barred, where he remained guarded by M. de Thémines until he was conveyed to the Bastille.

The exultation of Marie de Medicis was at its height. She embraced her son as fervently as though by the imprudence of which she had just been guilty she had insured the security of his throne, and received the congratulations of the courtiers with undisguised delight. "See, Sire;" she exclaimed, as with one hand resting upon the shoulder of the young King she advanced to the centre of the great saloon; "here is our brave M. de Thémines, to whom we are so greatly indebted. Can you not offer him a royal recompense? He is not yet a Marshal of France."

"I salute you, M. le Maréchal," said Louis with regal gravity. "In an hour I will sign your brevet."

M. de Thémines bowed low, and kissed the hand of the King.

"And I," smiled Marie de Medicis; "present you with a hundred thousand crowns. Your elder son the Marquis de Thémines is henceforth captain of my body-

* Manuscript Memoirs of the Cardinal de Richelieu in the archives of the minister for foreign affairs.

guard, and your younger the Baron de Lauzière equerry of Monsieur."

Again, the captor of M. de Condé bent down, and uttered his acknowledgments.

Low murmurs were heard among the nobles.

"Advance, M. de Montigny;" continued Marie, turning graciously towards an individual who had only just reached the capital, having on his way provided the Duke de Vendôme with a relay of horses in order to facilitate his escape; "Sire, the Count de Montigny was a faithful and devoted follower of your father. You owe him also some mark of favour."

"M. de Montigny shall be a marshal," said Louis XIII., enchanted by his new and unchecked exhibition of power.

"It would appear that to ask a *bâton* is to have one on this occasion;" said M. de Saint-Géran* in a low voice to the Marquis de Créquy; "let us therefore put in our claim."

"With all my heart;" replied the marquis gaily; "the ladies do not refuse us their smiles, nor the Queen-mother the festivities in her honour by which we impo-

* M. de Saint-Géran was an ensign of the gendarmes of the King's body-guard, and one of the nobles who were known by the *soubriquet* of *The Seventeen*, among whom were the Marquis de Créquy and Bassompierre. He was a devoted ally of the Duke de Sully.

verish our fortunes; why, therefore, should the King deprive us of our share of the easily-won distinctions of the day?"

So saying, the two courtiers moved a pace nearer to Marie de Medicis, who did not fail to observe and to comprehend the action.

"Happy is the monarch who sees himself surrounded by loyal subjects and by faithful friends;" pursued the exulting Princess; "your Majesty has not yet completed the good work so royally commenced?"

"M. de Créquy has already a *bâton;*" said Louis, somewhat bewildered by the new part he was called upon to enact on so large a scale.

"But you have forgotten, Sire, that he is neither duke nor peer."

"I salute you, M. le Duc et Pair;" said the young King.

The marquis acknowledged his new honours, and made way for his companion.

"Our list of marshals is full, M. de Saint-Géran," said Louis coldly.

The disappointed courtier bowed, and was about to retire, when Marie de Medicis met his eye, and its expression was far from satisfactory.

"MM. de Praslin and de Saint-Géran have both, nevertheless, merited high distinction, Sire;" she said anxiously. "Your pledge for the future will suffice, however, as they are both young enough to wait."

"Be it so, Madam;" responded her son, who was

becoming weary of the rapacity of his loyal subjects and faithful friends; "gentlemen, your services shall not be forgotten on the next vacancy."

And thus, as Bassompierre has recorded, did M. de Saint-Géran "extort the promise" of a *bâton.*

"And you, M. de Bassompierre;" smiled the Queen-mother, as in advancing up the hall their Majesties found themselves beside him; "unlike the others, you have put in no claim."

"Madam;" was the dignified reply; "it is not at such a moment as this, when we have merely done our duty, that we should seek for reward; but I trust that when by some important service I may merit to be remembered, the King will grant me both wealth and honours without any claim upon my own part."

Louis hesitated for a moment, and then, with a slight bow, passed on; and he had no sooner entered his private closet, still accompanied by his mother, than a herald announced in a loud voice that a great public council would be held on the following day at the Parliament.

It might well be imagined that when she retired, Marie de Medicis left grateful hearts behind her, but such was not the case; lavish as she had proved upon this occasion, she was far from having satisfied those who had assisted in the arrest of the Prince, and who did not fail openly to express their discontent.*

* Bassompierre, Mém., p. 118. Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 378—379. Richelieu, Mém., Book VII, p. 335.

During this time the dowager-Princess de Condé had been apprised of the arrest of her son; and maddened by the intelligence she had immediately rushed out of her house on foot, and hurried to the Pont Neuf, crying as she went: "To arms! To arms!"

"It is Madame de Nemours!" shouted the crowd which gathered about her. "Long live Madame de Nemours!"

"Long live Madame de Nemours!" echoed a voice, which was immediately recognised as that of the shoemaker Picard, who had, since his insult to the Maréchal d'Ancre, been the idol of the mob; "Concini has assassinated the first prince of the blood in the Louvre!"

Even this announcement, however, failed in the effect which had been anticipated by the Princess, whose object was to accomplish the rescue of her son; for while the respectable citizens hastened to close their shops and to place their families in safety, the lower orders rushed towards the hôtel of the Maréchal d'Ancre in the Faubourg St. Germain. The doors were driven in, furniture and valuables to the amount of two hundred thousand crowns were destroyed, and lighted torches were applied to the costly hangings of the apartments, which soon caused the carved and gilded wood-work to ignite; while a portion of the mob at the same time attacked the house of Corbinelli his secretary; and soon the two residences presented only a mass of bare and blackened

walls. M. de Liancourt, the Governor of Paris, opposed his authority in vain; he was hooted, driven back, and finally compelled to retire. Couriers were dispatched to the Louvre to inform the Queen-mother of the popular tumult, but no orders were issued in consequence; the councillors of Marie de Medicis deeming it desirable that the populace should be permitted to expend their violence upon the property of Concini, rather than turn their attention to the rescue of the Prince until the public excitement had abated.

The arrest of M. de Condé had alarmed all the leaders of the late faction, who hastened to secure their own safety. Bouillon, as we have stated, had already reached Charenton; and the Duke de Vendôme had fled in his turn on learning that all egress from the Louvre was forbidden, and that the outlets of the palace were strongly guarded. M. de Mayenne, who had hitherto remained in the capital, awaiting the progress of events, followed his example attended by a strong party of his friends. The Duke de Guise and the Prince de Joinville, alarmed lest they should be involved in the ruin of Condé through the machinations of Concini, with whom they were in open hostility, hastened to Soissons, in order to join M. de Mayenne, where they were shortly followed by the young Count and his mother; and, finally, the Duke de Nevers, who had indulged in a vain dream of rendering himself master of the Turkish empire through the medium of the Greeks, by declaring himself to be a

descendant of the Paleologi, suddenly halted on his way to Germany, and declared himself determined to join the new faction of the princes.*

These defections created a great void at the Louvre, but the Queen-mother disdained to express her mortification; and, on the contrary, affected the most entire confidence in the nobles who still maintained their adherence to the crown.

She was well aware that Condé had lost much of his popularity by abandoning the interests of the people at the Treaty of Loudun, and that the Protestants equally resented the selfishness by which he had also sacrificed their cause to his ambition; while she had moreover ascertained that the flight of the Duke de Guise and his brother had been simply induced by misrepresentation, and that through the medium of the females of their family they might readily be recalled. These circumstances gave her courage; and when on the morning of the 2nd of September she entered the war-council, which was held in the Augustine monastery and presided by the Maréchal de Brissac, accompanied by her two sons, she remarked with undisguised gratification, that more than two thousand nobles were already assembled. When the King, the Queen-mother, Monsieur, the great dignitaries, and the ministers had taken their seats, the doors were thrown open to all who chose to enter; and in a few moments the vast hall

* Richelieu, Book VII, p. 335.

was densely crowded. Silence was then proclaimed; M. de Brissac declared that the session was open; and the President Jeannin forthwith commenced reading, in the name of the King, the celebrated declaration explaining the arrest of the Prince de Condé; proclaiming him a traitor; and finally, promising a free pardon to all who had aided and abetted him in his disloyal practices, on condition of their appearing within fifteen days to solicit the pardon of his Majesty; in default of which concession they would be involved in the same accusation of *lèse-majesté*.*

More than once, during the delivery of this discourse, many of the nobles who were attached to the faction of the princes gave utterance to a suppressed murmur; but it was not until its close that they openly and vociferously expressed their dissatisfaction. Then, indeed, the hall became a scene of confusion and uproar which baffles all description; voice was heard above voice; the clang of weapons as they were struck against the stone floor sounded ominously; and the terrified young King, after glancing anxiously towards de Luynes, who returned his look by another quite as helpless, fastened his gaze upon his mother as if from her alone he could hope for protection. Nor was his mute appeal made in vain; for although an expression of anxiety could be traced upon the noble features of Marie de Medicis, they betrayed no feeling of alarm.

* Unpublished Mém. of Richelieu in the archives of the Foreign Office.

She was pale but calm, and her eyes wandered over the assembly as steadily as though she herself played no part in the drama which was enacting before her. For a few moments she remained motionless, as if absorbed in this momentous scrutiny; but ultimately she turned and uttered a few words in a low voice to Bassompierre, who was standing immediately behind her; and she had no sooner done so than, accompanied by M. de Saint-Géran, the captain of the King's guard, he left the hall. In an instant afterwards both officers re-appeared, followed by a company of halberdiers, who silently took up their position in the rear of the sovereign and his mother; and the Queen no sooner saw the gleam of their lances than she caused it to be intimated to the President Jeannin that she desired to address the meeting.

When her purpose was communicated to the assembly silence was by degrees restored; and then the clear, full voice of Marie de Medicis was heard to the further recesses of the vast apartment.

"Nobles and gentlemen;" she said with a gesture of quiet dignity; "as Regent of France I have also a right to speak on an occasion of this importance; for since the death of Henry the Great, my lord and husband, it is I who have constantly borne the burthen of the crown. You know, one and all, how many obstacles I have had to oppose, how many intrigues to frustrate, how many dangers to overcome. An intestine war throughout the kingdom; disaffection

alike in Paris and in the provinces; and amid all these struggles for the national welfare, I had to combat a still more gnawing anxiety; I had to watch over the safety of the King my son, and that of the other children of France; and never, gentlemen, for one hour did my dignity as a Queen cause me to forget my tenderness as a mother. I might have been sustained in this daily struggle—I might have found strong arms and devoted hearts to share in my toils, and in my endeavours—but that these have too often failed me, I need scarcely say. Thus, then, if any among you complain of the past, it is me whom they accuse, for the King my son having transferred his authority to myself can have incurred no blame, nor do I wish to transfer it to another. Every enterprise which I have undertaken has had the glory and prosperity of France as its sole aim and object. If I have at times been mistaken in my estimate of the measures calculated to insure so desirable a result, I have at least never persisted in my error; I have surrounded myself by able and conscientious counsellors; MM. de Villeroy and Jeannin were chosen by the most ancient and noble families in the kingdom—the Cardinal de la Valette and the Bishop of Luçon-Richelieu are my advisers—the estimable Miron, Provost of Paris, in conjunction with Barbin represent the *tiers-état*—while as regards the people, I have ever been careful to mete out justice to them with an equal hand."

Marie paused for an instant, and she had no sooner

done so than loud shouts echoed through the cloistral arches, as the crowd vociferously and almost unanimously responded: "You have—You have. Long live the Queen!"

"Nor did I limit the sacred duties of my mission here;" pursued the Regent; "I had work to do without as well as within the kingdom; and it has not been neglected. I undertook and accomplished a successful negociation of marriage for the King my son with the Infanta of Spain; our ancient rival England has become our ally; Germany has learnt to fear us; and the princes of Italy have bowed their heads before our triumphant banners. Have I not then, gentlemen, consulted in all things the honour of France, and increased her power? Have I not compelled respect where I have failed to secure amity? Can you point to one act of my authority by which the interests of the nation have been compromised, or her character tarnished in the eyes of foreign states? I boldly await your answer. Thus much for our external relations; and now I appeal to your justice; I ask you with equal confidence if, when within the kingdom, faction after faction was detected and suppressed, I yielded to any sentiment of undue vengeance? Has not every outbreak of unprovoked disaffection rather tended to exhibit the forbearance of the King my son and my own? Need I recal the concessions which we have made to those who had sought to injure us? Need I ask you to remember that we have bestowed upon

them governments, titles, riches, high offices of state, and every honour which it was in our power to confer? What more then could you require or demand, gentlemen? And yet, when the King my son has pardoned where he might have punished, you have responded by seditious shouts, by wilful disrespect, and even by attempts against his royal person! It was time for him to exert his prerogative, gentlemen,—you have compelled him to assert his power; and yet you murmur. Now, with God's help, we may hope for internal peace; France must have lost her place among the European nations had she been longer permitted to prey upon her own vitals. One individual alone could have condemned her to this self-slaughter, and we have delivered her from the peril by committing that individual to the Bastille."

As the Queen-mother uttered these words her voice was drowned in the universal burst of fury and violence which assailed her on all sides; nobles, citizens, and people alike yelled forth their discontent; but the unquenchable spirit of Marie de Medicis did not fail her even at this terrible moment. Rising with the emergency, she seemed rather to ride upon the storm than to quail beneath it; her eyes flashed fire, a red spot burned upon her cheek, and anger and indignation might be read upon every feature of her expressive countenance. When the tumult was at its height, she rose haughtily from her seat, and striking her clenched hand violently upon the

table before her, she exclaimed in a tone of menace: "How now, Counts and Barons! Is it then a perpetual revolt upon which you have determined? When pardon and peace are frankly offered to you, and when both should be as welcome to all good Frenchmen as a calm after a tempest, you reject it? Do you hold words less acceptable than blows? Do you prefer the sword to the hand of friendship? Be it even as you will then. If friendship does not content you we will try the sword, for clemency exerted beyond a certain limit degenerates into weakness. You shall have no reason to esteem your rulers either feeble or cowardly. You have here and now defied me, and I accept the defiance. Do you desire to know how I respond? It is thus. In the name of the King my son and in my own, in the name of my offended dignity, and in the name of France, I, in my turn, declare the most stringent and unsparing war against rebellion, be it the work of whom it may. Neither high blood nor ancient title shall suffice to screen a traitor; war, war to the death, shall be henceforward my battle-cry against the malcontents who are striving to decimate the nation; and do not delude yourselves with the belief that I shall be single-handed in the struggle, for I will call the people to my aid, and the people will maintain the cause of their sovereigns. We will try our strength at last, and the strife will be a memorable one; our sons shall relate it with awe and terror to their descendants, and it will be

a tale of shame which will cleave to your names for centuries to come. Ah, gentlemen, the rule of a woman has rendered you over-bold; and you have forgotten that there have been women who have wielded a sceptre of iron. Look to England—is there no sterner lesson to be learnt there? Or think you that Marie de Medicis fears to emulate Elizabeth? You have mistaken both yourselves and me. My forbearance has not hitherto grown out of fear; but the lion sometimes disdains to struggle with the tiger, not because he misdoubts his own strength, but because he cares not to lavish it idly. I also feel my strength, and when the fitting moment comes, it shall be put forth. To your war-cry I will respond by my war-cry; to your leaders I will oppose my leaders; and when you shout Condé and Mayenne! I will answer triumphantly Louis de France and Gaston d'Orleans! Draw the sword of rebellion if it be too restless to remain in the scabbard; you will not find me shrink from the flash of steel; and should you take the field I will be there to meet you. Rally your chiefs, the array can have no terrors for me, prepared as I am to confront you with some of the best and the bravest in all France. Deny this if you can, you who seek to undermine the throne, and to sacrifice the nation to your own ambitious egotism, and I will confound you with the names of Guise, Montmorency, Brissac, Sully, Bassompierre, Lesdiguières, Marillac, and Ornano; these, and many more of the great captains of the

age will peal out my war-cry, and rally round the threatened throne of their legitimate sovereign. My son will be in the midst of them; and mark me well, gentlemen, the struggle shall no sooner have commenced than every pampered adventurer who has poisoned the ear of the monarch, and steeled his heart against his mother, shall be crushed under her heel; and should he dare to raise his head I will assign to him as his armour-bearer the executioner of Paris."

Never before had the Regent evinced such an amount of energy; never before had she so laid bare the secret workings of her spirit. The adherents of the princes trembled, as they discovered with how formidable an enemy they should be called thenceforward to contend; while the majority of the nobles who were faithful to the royal cause, and above all those whose names she had so proudly quoted, uttered loud acclamations of delight and triumph.

Bewildered by the daring of his mother, Louis once more sought for support from his favourite, but de Luynes was in no position to afford it. The allusion to himself with which Marie de Medicis had concluded her harangue was too palpable to be mistaken; and he felt that, should she maintain her purpose, he was lost. Even Richelieu, as if crushed beneath the impassioned eloquence of the Regent, sat with drooping head and downcast eyes; and meanwhile Marie herself, after having glanced defyingly

over the assembly, calmly resumed her seat, and desired that the business of the meeting might proceed.

Before the sitting closed, it was determined that the army should be placed upon the war footing, and that a levy of six thousand Swiss should immediately be made; and this arrangement completed, the Queen-mother proceeded to attempt by every means in her power a reconciliation with the Guises.

For this purpose she dispatched four nobles in whom she could confide to Soissons, to negociate with the princes, nor was it long ere they ascertained that individual jealousy had tended to create considerable disunion among them; and that each appeared ready, should any plausible pretext present itself, to abandon the others. Under these circumstances it was not difficult to convince the Duke de Guise and his brother that no hostile design had ever been entertained against them, and to induce them to admit their regret at the hasty step which they had taken, together with their anxiety to redeem it. The Duke de Longueville was equally ready to effect his reconciliation with the court; and having arranged with the royal envoys the terms upon which they consented to return, they were severally declared innocent of all connivance with the rebellious princes. The Duke de Nevers, however, refused to listen to any compromise with the crown; and, in defiance of the royal command, continued his endeavours to possess himself of the

fortresses of Champagne, which were not comprised in his government.*

The persevering disaffection of M. de Nevers occasioned the disgrace of du Vair, who betrayed an indisposition to proceed against him which so irritated Marie de Medicis that she induced the King to deprive him of the seals, and to bestow them upon Mangot, making Richelieu secretary of state in his place; that wily prelate having already, by his great talent and ready expedients, rendered himself almost indispensable to his royal patroness.

The arrest of the Prince de Condé had restored the self-confidence of Concini, who shortly afterwards returned to court, and resumed his position with an arrogance and pretension more undisguised than ever. The maréchale, however, had never recovered from the successive shocks to which she had been subjected by the death of her child and the destruction of her house; but had fallen into a state of discouragement and melancholy which threatened her reason.† For days she shut herself into her apartments, refusing to receive the most confidential of her friends, and complaining that she was bewitched by those who looked at her.‡ Her domestic misery was, moreover, embittered by the public hatred; of which, in conjunction with her husband, she had

* Richelieu, Book VII, p. 359.

† Unpublished Mem. of Richelieu.

‡ Richelieu, Book VII, p. 368. Fontenay-Mareuil, p. 361.

become more than ever the object. It would appear that the injury already inflicted upon the Italian favourites had stimulated rather than satiated the detestation of the people towards them both. Every grievance under which the lower orders groaned was attributed to the influence of Concini and his wife; they were accused of inciting the Queen-mother to the acts of profusion by which the nation was impoverished; while every disappointment, misfortune, or oppression was traced to the same cause. Many affected to believe that Marie was the victim of sorcery, and that such was the real source of the influence of Leonora; and thus the heartbroken mother and unhappy wife, whose morbid imagination had caused her to consider her trials as the result of magical arts, was herself asserted to have employed them against her royal benefactress.*

The nomination of Richelieu as secretary of state had been effected through the influence of Concini, who in vain endeavoured to persuade him to resign the bishopric of Luçon, as incompatible with his new duties. The astute prelate had more extended views than those of his patron; nor was it long ere he succeeded in arousing the jealousy of the maréchal, and in convincing him, when too late, that he had, while endeavouring to further his own fortunes, only raised up a more dangerous and potent enemy than any to whom he had hitherto been

* Fontenay-Mareuil, Book III, p. 369.

opposed. Richelieu had no sooner joined the ministry than he made advances to the ancient allies of Henry IV., whom he regarded as the true friends of France; and for the purpose of conciliating those whose support he deemed most essential to the welfare of the kingdom, he hastened to dispatch ambassadors to the courts of England, Holland, and Germany, who were instructed to explain to the several monarchs to whom they were accredited the reasons which had induced Louis XIII. to arrest the Prince de Condé; and to assure them that the measures adopted by the French court were not induced, as had been falsely represented, by any desire to conciliate either Rome or Spain. To this assurance he subjoined a rapid synopsis of the means employed by the Queen-mother to insure the peace of the kingdom, and the efforts made by the Prince to disturb it; and, finally, he recapitulated the numerous alliances which had taken place between the royal familes of France and Spain during several centuries, as an explanation of the close friendship which existed between the two countries.*

Meanwhile considerable difficulty was experienced in the equipment of the army which had been raised. The royal treasury was exhausted, and in several provinces the revolted nobles had possessed themselves of the public monies; financial edicts were issued which created

* Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 387, 388.

fresh murmurs among the citizens; the princes assumed an attitude of stern and steady defiance; and the year 1616 closed amid apprehension, disaffection, and mistrust.

END OF VOL. II.

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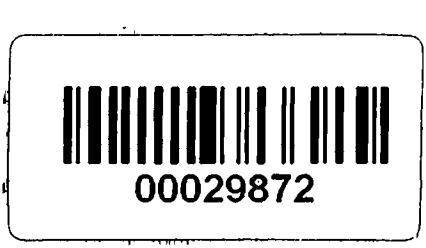
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